

# THE LONDON READER

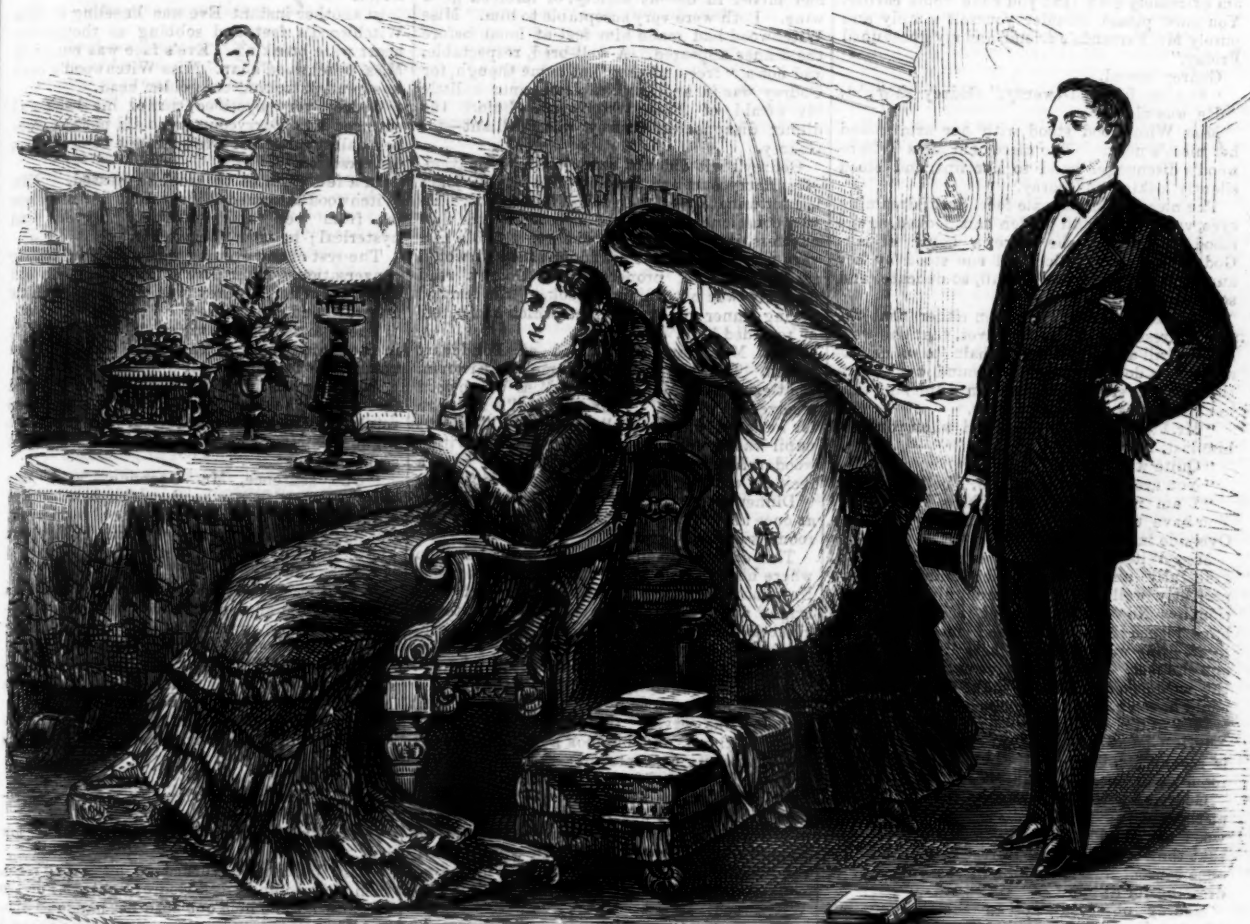
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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[SHE WAS THE EXACT REVERSE OF THE MISS WITCHWOOD HE HAD FORMED IN HIS OWN MIND.]

## THE HEARTS OF THREE GOOD WOMEN. BY PIERRE LECLERCQ.

### CHAPTER V.

"WELCOME TO PONDCOURT HOUSE, MR. OVERSIDE."

The strange child who had the fay-like laugh led Godrey into the library of Pondcourt House. Miss Witchwood was sitting on an arm-chair, reading by the light of a lamp, which was placed on a table by her side. Her right elbow rested on the table, her right hand rested her head, her left hand held the book.

The first sensation she produced on Godrey was unmixed astonishment. For some few moments he could say nothing. He simply stared at Miss Witchwood, who looked at her niece for an explanation.

Miss Witchwood's niece gave it excitedly in her own peculiarly spontaneous way.

Directly Miss Witchwood understood who Godrey was she left her chair, and (as her niece had done a moment before) gave him both her hands.

The first words she addressed to Godrey were, "Welcome to Pondcourt House, Mr. Over-side."

The first words he spoke to her were the truest he had uttered in his life.

"You are very good, Miss Witchwood," he said.

The cause of Godrey's intense surprise was the personal appearance of his new mistress. She was the exact reverse of the Miss Witchwood he had formed in his own mind.

Unconsciously, he had commenced to form this imaginary Miss Witchwood in the banker's private room, though only dimly. Annie's prophetic prattle, during the packing of his box, had helped to make the imaginary Miss Witchwood more definite. The journey, the servant, the house, and his young pupil had each tended to her formation as a cross, ugly, eccentric old maid. When the child's hand had touched the handle of the library door Godrey had felt sure that he knew the kind of lady he was about to see. Godrey was very wrong.

The real Miss Witchwood was not "cross."

Her amiability was serene. She had positively never been known to lose her temper.

Ugly? No! The form and features of the real Miss Witchwood were almost perfection. The two defects which brought that word "almost" from us made her to the eyes of man more lovely. Without these defects she would have seemed to be a living poem, picture, or religion—a something to be loved and admired with devotion, but with awe. With these defects she was a woman.

For the last few centuries the woman-making department of Dame Nature's manufactory has been rather carelessly conducted, and some five-and-twenty years ago we believe Dame Nature must have addressed her workmen thus:

"My children. This branch of our business is falling off. You are departing gradually too far from the original pattern. We must advertise. Let us unite our every effort towards the production of a superfine article, which we will place in our shop window as a sample of the articles within, although we know very well that the articles within are in every way inferior. I will superintend this! Come, let us do it!"

They did it. Result—Miss Emily Witchwood, of Pondcourt House.

First defect (?)—Miss Witchwood was a little too stout. Second defect (?)—Miss Witchwood

was near-sighted, and wore, when reading or writing (on one point Annie and Godrey were right), spectacles.

It was some time before Godrey recovered from his surprise—some time before the real Miss Witchwood banished the imaginary Miss Witchwood from his mind for ever.

"You must understand, Mr. Overside," Miss Witchwood said to Godrey, "that I did not expect you until to-morrow or the day after. I am extremely glad that you have come earlier. You must please consider yourself simply and purely Mr. Farrands's friend, and my guest until Friday."

Godrey bowed.

"She is five-and-twenty," Godrey thought. He was right.

Miss Witchwood stood with her arm round her niece's neck. The niece held Miss Witchwood's disengaged hand to her lips, and stood silently looking at Godrey.

The niece, with her pale face, dark, dreaming eyes, violet dress, and golden hair, looked, as she stood there, as if she were a being of air. Godrey had not noticed till she stood by her aunt that his pupil was so frail, so delicate, and soymph-like.

He had not noticed till then either that the aunt's dress was of black velvet, that she wore a little frill and a plain gold chain (to which was attached a double eye-glass) round her throat, that she was slightly taller than Annie, nor that her hair was a rich, dark brown.

"Mr. Farrands was quite well when you saw him last, I hope?"

"Quite well."

"You are not related to him, I believe?"

"I am related to no one, Miss Witchwood. You have the pleasure of addressing the only Overside in the world."

Miss Witchwood laughed, as she did all else, gracefully and easily. Her manners were perfectly well bred, yet thoroughly unconventional. No combination of accidents could have placed Miss Witchwood in a ridiculous light. She was mistress of herself, and of every one she met. She could have detected flaws in the wisdom of a learned man, as well as she could have chatted to school-girls of their love.

Miss Witchwood glanced at the library clock.

"Half-past six," she said. "Our dinner hour is seven, Mr. Overside. Shall I show you the room we have called yours?"

Godrey muttered something about "luggage at the station," and "dress coat." Miss Witchwood answered that it should be sent for, and that they would forgive Mr. Overside, and for once consent not to indulge in the vulgarity of dressing for dinner.

Godrey observed—not in the library, but afterwards—that whenever the aunt and the niece were together he forgot the presence of the latter, who seemed on those occasions to be a portion of the aunt.

Miss Witchwood tapped her niece's golden head lightly—the sylph-like airiness immediately disappeared, and Godrey's pupil was a living maid of sixteen or seventeen again.

"Come, Eve!" said Miss Witchwood, "let us introduce Mr. Overside to his room."

Godrey opened the library door, and followed Miss Witchwood and her niece out into the hall, up a broad, richly carpeted staircase, and into the room which they "had called his."

A large, handsomely-furnished room, with the same expression of ponderous comfort about it as he had noticed in the first room he had entered. Godrey expressed his satisfaction.

"Withhold your opinion of Pondcourt House, and the view from that window, Mr. Overside, until you see them to-morrow, less the fog."

"I will, Miss Witchwood. I fear I shall not be able to give an unbiased opinion though, for your kindness has already prejudiced me in their favour."

In the dining-room Godrey was introduced to a very distant relation of Miss Witchwood's. A somewhat loudly-dressed little lady of sixty, with undecided features and an abstracted expression. Her name was "Mrs. Barrycourt," and she was a lady-like edition of Mrs. Sheene.

Hearing that Godrey had been lodging in the

city of London, and being anxious to set him at his ease by broaching a topic in which she fancied he must be well versed, she asked him "the public opinion as to the merits or demerits of the new Lord Mayor," which caused Godrey's pupil to laugh in that wild way of hers, and then to put her arms round Mrs. Barrycourt's neck and kiss her violently.

The dinner was from soup to dessert in the best possible taste. It was long since Godrey had mixed in decent society, or imbibed good wine. Both were very acceptable to him. Miss Witchwood had made him feel at home before the dinner appeared. A well-bred, respectable, and not a "free-and-easy" at home though, for Godrey was in an inexplicable manner a little bit afraid of Miss Witchwood. Before the dinner disappeared Godrey was brilliant—for Godrey.

Godrey's wit did not bear close investigation. Mrs. Barrycourt and Eve laughed at his jokes indiscriminately—not so Miss Witchwood. He was conscious of being as a book to his new mistress, but she thought did not trouble him very much, for he was confident that she would read that book properly, and Godrey read properly was not an ugly book. He learned during dinner some trivial facts which had better be recorded here.

That Mrs. Barrycourt lived at Pondcourt House. That his pupil's surname was Elworth. That excepting Mr. Farrands, Miss Witchwood received no visitors. That his pupil's affection for her aunt was painfully intense. That his pupil was an enigma. That when Miss Witchwood refused anything it would have been a reckless waste of time to ask her to accept it.

Dinner over, Godrey begged permission to at once accompany the ladies to the drawing-room, which was granted.

The drawing-room he found was the room where he had seen his pupil for the first time. Now that the gas was lighted it looked very bright and cheerful. Eve, as they entered, glanced timidly at the sofa, and then beseechingly at Godrey, both with astounding rapidity. The glance she gave Godrey said, quite plainly: "Pray don't tell aunt."

Undoubtedly, an enigma.

Coffee was served. Godrey was a whimsical fellow at times, and he took a cup, solely that the taste of its contents might remind him of Mrs. Sheene's breakfasts. It did not, however, for Miss Witchwood's coffee was extremely good and Mrs. Sheene's was not.

Without invitation, Eve seated herself at the pianoforte, and turning her head away from it ran the fingers of her right hand over its keys.

"Does my pupil play?" Godrey asked Miss Witchwood.

"More, Mr. Overside; your pupil composes."

"Well?" he asked, in an undertone.

"No! Miss Elworth's execution and Miss Elworth's conception are both too—too Miss Elworth," she answered, with a smile.

Miss Witchwood was about to sigh, but did not. She checked it, and said to her niece:

"Mr. Overside would be glad to hear something of your composition, please, Eve."

Eve immediately commenced playing. Godrey listened intently. At first the notes seemed to be struck at random without regard to harmony. After a few more bars he found that he had been mistaken. A rough, weird melody ran through the whole piece. Its originality and eccentricity were startling. Its external character changed repeatedly. Its internal character never altered from first to last. Soft, gay, mournful, reckless, meek, then almost devilish in its defiance, yet always seeming to tell the same weird story.

Eve, who had in a few hours seemed to him as dead, as simply a merry child, then as a part of the aunt she so loved, was lost to him now in her own music. He did not see her as she sat at the piano; he heard her in the strangely-linked notes she played.

Godrey looked at the aunt once while the niece was playing. He had—let us confess it—doubted that Miss Witchwood loved her niece—without good reason, but still he had strongly doubted it. Not so now.

Tears of love, painful from its strength, were in Miss Witchwood's face, though not in Miss Witchwood's eyes.

Suddenly the music ceased. The effect was very strange. More so when the little composer left the piano with a scared expression on her face, glanced at the sofa, and ran as though pursued by some hideous thing from her side of the room to Miss Witchwood's.

"Oh, aunt! aunt!" she cried, in a voice of terror.

In another instant Eve was kneeling at Miss Witchwood's feet, and sobbing as though her heart were breaking. Eve's face was buried in Miss Witchwood's lap. Miss Witchwood's hand was gently stroking the golden head.

Godrey, very mystified, turned his back and engaged Mrs. Barrycourt (who did not appear to be at all surprised at Eve's strange behaviour) in conversation.

In a few minutes the sobbing ceased. Miss Witchwood informed Godrey, that her niece was far from well and extremely nervous and hysterical; he must forgive her.

The rest of the evening was spent in trifling conversation. After Eve's music and its odd effect upon her, Godrey was naturally a little awkward and constrained.

They parted for the night. Godrey was left in the dining-room to enjoy the smoke he had voluntarily forfeited after dinner.

While he was lighting a cigar Miss Witchwood (to whom he had just said "good night") returned, which reminded Godrey of that last night at Mrs. Sheene's (now long since it seemed!).

"One sentence, Mr. Overside," said Miss Witchwood, with her hand on the door. "Eve will want her first drawing-lesson to-morrow, but as you are simply my guest till Friday, you know, Eve will not receive it."

Godrey bowed.

"Another sentence, Mr. Overside"—with a smile—"I am anxious to devote to-morrow to introducing myself to you, and to being introduced myself to Mr. Overside."

Godrey bowed again. He perfectly understood her meaning. She would have been intelligible to the veriest idiot on earth.

"A third sentence, Mr. Overside. You are engaged to take me to-morrow morning to the Priory."

Again Godrey bowed.

"And—that is all. Forgive me for disturbing you. Good night."

"Good night, Miss Witchwood," with a low bow.

Miss Witchwood turned to leave the room, then stopped and faced Godrey again. For the second time she held out both her hands to him, and he took them. For the second time she said to him:

"Welcome to Pondcourt House, Mr. Overside!"

When the hall clock struck the hour of twelve that night Godrey was in his own room. He kept his promise. He said, most fervently, "God bless Annie!"

When the gold watch with the white face said "it is midnight," poor, weeping little Annie kept her promise too, and fell on her knees and said from her heart "God bless Godrey!"

The hall clock and the gold watch were both right, yet—it is often so in such matters—the blessings were not spoken simultaneously as Godrey and Annie had wished them to be spoken.

Their pretty little love scheme was a failure, for they had lost sight of one small stubborn fact. There was a difference of some minutes between the time of the city of London and the time of Pondcourt.

## CHAPTER VI.

"ITS MOTTO IS A DISGRACE."

AT nine o'clock on the following morning Godrey opened his bedroom window and inhaled for the first time the air of Pondcourt at its best. A clear, crisp morning it was too, one that should



have belonged to October—one perhaps that October had lent to November, or paid to it for some past debt.

From his bedroom window there was only one interruption to a grand green, extensive prospect—the little town of Pondcourt.

Saving the houses of Pondcourt, and what seemed to be a farm on a slight eminence some four miles distant, no dwelling-place was visible. The iron destroyer of the picturesque had not yet ravished the immediate neighbourhood. Miss Witchwood's residence stood very much alone.

"Good morning, Mr. Overside!"

Godfrey looked down. Miss Witchwood was walking in the grounds before breakfast.

"Well?" she said, waving her hand towards Pondcourt.

"Magnificent!" said Godfrey.

He joined her in the grounds at her invitation, and they walked round the house slowly. Miss Witchwood requested his opinion on it. To anyone else he would have answered with a few polite falsehoods. To Miss Witchwood he felt bound to speak the ungarnished truth.

"I think it extremely large, beautifully situated, and—very impressive," he said.

"Yes; but tell me why you do not like it," she answered, although he had not expressed any dissatisfaction at the appearance of the house.

Godfrey told her immediately.

"In whatever manner I regard it," he said, "the impression it gives me is an ugly one. As an artist or an architect, I should say that it is fashioned in too great a number of styles, that its parts are perfect individually, but that the parts are not on good terms with their fellows, and that the whole is therefore inartistic. If I were a woman I would say that a mysterious gloom hangs about the place, and—"

"But being a man," interrupted Miss Witchwood, with something of a sad smile.

"But being a man," laughed Godfrey, "I think like a woman in this matter, but I keep my thoughts a secret."

"You are right, Mr. Overside," she said, as they reached the breakfast-room. "I do not like Pondcourt House myself, always!"

During breakfast Miss Witchwood mentioned that she intended showing Mr. Overside the one lion of Pondcourt—the Priory. Eve looked disappointed. After some moments' silence she begged her aunt to allow her to accompany them. Her aunt said that the morning was cold, and that Eve was not well. She thought Eve had better stay at home and keep Mrs. Barrycourt company. Mrs. Barrycourt very mildly agreed with Miss Witchwood. Eve said nothing more that morning. Eve's dark, dreaming eyes were filled with tears.

Shortly after breakfast Godfrey and Miss Witchwood started for the Priory. Her walking costume was neither fashionable nor pretty, yet it was admirably suited to her. The same black velvet dress, a long sealskin cloak, a dark bonnet with a thick veil, and black gloves.

Walking by her side, Godfrey defined one of the impressions she had given him last night and again now. Actually, he was two years younger than she. In her presence he felt ten, at least.

She was taking him to the Priory. She knew the Priory, and he did not. As they passed out of the grounds, through the iron gateway, he said to himself:

"If I knew it, and she did not, she would still be taking me, as she is now. Miss Witchwood must always be the responsible person of a party. Miss Witchwood must always lead."

"Now, Mr. Overside," she said, when they had reached the road, "I have planned this little excursion, simply that we may become better known to each other. For some time—at least I hope so—for some time, you Mrs. Barrycourt, my niece, and I are to be as members of one family; now a family's well-being is doomed unless its members have a pretty accurate knowledge of each other. Shall I express myself more clearly?"

"If you please," said Godfrey, "though it is unnecessary."

"Then I will not do it, in that case," she said.

Godfrey bowed and blushed.

"I hope this walk of ours will prepare you for the existence of one drawback to your comfort with us," she said, with a smile.

"What is that drawback, Miss Witchwood?"

"Miss Witchwood's habit of saying what she means in a somewhat ugly fashion," she answered.

"So far," answered Godfrey, unconsciously imitating her, "I admire the drawback."

Miss Witchwood smiled.

Godfrey waited in silence for her next words.

"Please do not imagine," she said, "that I intend to take your confidence into custody summarily and against your will. On the contrary, I have Mr. Farrands's word that you are competent to teach drawing, and I have my own conviction that you are a gentleman. I am thoroughly satisfied. On the other hand," she said, gravely, after a short time, "I feel the necessity of telling you some things about Eve and myself very strongly. If I do not do this, Mr. Overside, I fear the mysterious gloom you observed this morning will creep indoors and sadden us all. Yes" (thoughtfully), "it is right that I should tell you."

"You are the better judge, Miss Witchwood," he answered.

He was going to say "the better judge of THAT," but did not, because he felt that Miss Witchwood was a better judge of ALL things than he was.

"Come," she said, "I will show you the necessity. You came to us last night a stranger. Recall Miss Elworth's behaviour in the drawing-room, recall indeed her manner, or rather manners, during the whole evening. As a stranger what construction do you place on her conduct?"

"I can find none, Miss Witchwood," he replied, after consideration.

"You must have thought it over while you were smoking that cigar. What did you say to yourself? Miss Elworth is—"

"A mystery—an enigma!" said Godfrey.

"Quite so," said Miss Witchwood, "and before you can feel at home with us and we with you that enigma must be solved, Mr. Overside."

"Eve's mother and I," she said, pulling the thick veil over her face, were 'only' daughters. Our mother died when we were young. Our father was what I call a child. Persons who did not know him as we knew him said, 'That man is strong-minded—that man has steel nerves, gold pockets, and an iron will.' They were wrong on all points, saving the golden pockets. His strength of mind was simply the strength of weakness. His nerves had been shattered by a dissipated boyhood. His will was of iron certainly, but of iron badly wrought. Mr. Witchwood was almost sinfully obstinate. His weak mind would conceive what it regarded to be right very rapidly, and he would say at once 'I will do this.' When he said that nothing could dissuade him from doing it. His obstinate iron will was impenetrable. If—if he had said, 'This stage-play is good,' and Shakespeare had come to life and said, 'This stage-play is bad,' my father would have smiled pityingly on Shakespeare. He is revealed in his motto—the wretched, contemptible motto of his ancestors and mine. From the first Witchwood to my father—the last—the race has been noted for its want of judgment. Its motto is a disgrace—its motto is 'J'AI DIT!'"

It occurred to Godfrey that although "J'ai dit" was a bad cry for the father it was a very splendid one for the daughter. Miss Witchwood was manifestly not a Witchwood, so far as want of judgment was concerned.

"I am speaking of my father as a man understand, if you please," she went on, "and not as my father. I loved him dearly."

"I understand you thoroughly," said Godfrey.

"My sister Eve," continued Miss Witchwood, "was nine years older than I. She was delicate and romantic. I was strong and matter-of-fact. She, at seventeen, was in the habit of seeking and acting on advice of mine when I was eight. It

is laughable, but it is true. I loved her passionately. I have said that she was delicate. The dreadful disease which threatened to take her from me was epilepsy.

"I have often knelt," she went on, "in the room where you slept last night, Mr. Overside, and prayed that my strength might be given to her, that her fatal illness might be given instead to me. When the disease was in its earliest stages she fell in love with Mr. Elworth. He was a wild, careless man, with nothing but his love for her to recommend him. It was the old Witchwood story again. Poor Eve said, 'J'ai dit.' My father said, 'If she marry him I will never forgive her, I will disown her, I will never see her again. J'ai dit.'"

"At eighteen," continued Miss Witchwood, "the malady assumed its worst form. Her case was declared hopeless. Her mind as well as her body was enfeebled. The poor, rash child fled from Pondcourt House and was married to Mr. Elworth. My father kept his word and never saw her again—never forgave her. I corresponded with her secretly. The unhappy result of this unhappy marriage, Mr. Overside, was your pupil—the enigma—Eve!"

"My poor sister, immediately after the birth of my niece," said Miss Witchwood, "died in a state of the wildest insanity. Her husband was a coward; he shot himself. Little Eve was left alone in the world. My father refused to see his little grand-daughter, or to contribute to her support. 'J'ai dit' again. Having said that she might have starved, so far as he was concerned. He ordered me neither in the present nor the future to consider that the poor baby was of our flesh and blood. I disobeyed. Little Eve was at the London lodging-house where her parents had left her. I knew the address and I sent all my pocket money to the people at the lodging-house.

"Take care of my dear little child," I wrote, 'until I can claim her.' My pocket-money was insufficient for the child's support. At thirteen years of age, Mr. Overside, I borrowed the sum of five hundred pounds, unknown to my father. The Witchwood 'J'ai dit,' you observe, was strong within me also. I had said, 'Eve shall be my child.'"

"Mr. Farrands," Miss Witchwood went on, "was a friend of my father's. He was then only a junior partner in the banking firm. I spoke to him about poor little Eve, and prayed to him to give me his assistance. He did."

"You will one day be mistress of Pondcourt House, old-fashioned Miss Emily," he said, "and then you shall repay me. I will invest five hundred pounds on this doll you have never seen, and I will not tell your father."

"He kept his promise. I was happy, comparatively. That, Mr. Overside, is the reason I have so much respect for your friend the banker."

"On my twentieth birthday," she continued, "my father died. His entire fortune was left to me unconditionally. My first act was to send for the niece I had never seen, but so long longed for. My father's will did not mention her. He must have known that I should seek her after his death. He must have repented of that 'J'ai dit.' I hope so."

"Ever since my father's death," she went on, "Eve and I have been living our quiet, peaceful life together at Pondcourt House. We have only two friends—Mrs. Barrycourt, who lives with us, and Mr. Farrands, who occasionally visits us."

She ceased speaking for a few moments.

"Now, Mr. Overside," she resumed, "you will better understand the enigma. You will find much about your pupil that will be inexplicable, unless you bear the sad story of her parentage in your mind. Eve is in form and face the image of her mother. Her mother was almost insane when she married—her mother was thoroughly mad when she gave birth to Eve. Mr. Overside," her hand on his arm, and her voice lowered for a moment, "Mr. Overside, your pupil is mad too!"

"Mad!"

"Sometimes, Mr. Overside," she answered, very calmly.

"And the affliction which turned your poor sister's brain—epilepsy—"

"Has been mercifully withheld from her so far," said Miss Witchwood. "Your pupil is only mad. That is all."

"Incurably mad?"

"Incurably, according to the highest authorities on the subject," replied Miss Witchwood; "though, as I have said, she is mad occasionally. When she burst into tears last night she was insane; when her sobs had ceased she was as sensible as you or I."

"These fits are occasioned, I presume, by some unusual excitement?" said Godrey, in a low voice.

"No," answered Miss Witchwood. "No cause can be detected. They are independent of anything we do. She seems to possess two minds. The one that is diseased sleeps during the reign of the pure mind. When the diseased mind wakes it shows her ghastly images, gives her most horrible thoughts, and maddens her. All this sounds wild to you, possibly. They are, remember, her own ideas on the matter, and not mine."

"May I ask what has been advised?"

"Yes," replied Miss Witchwood. "Simply that she should lead a quiet life—neither an exciting nor monotonous one. An eminent physician recommended two or three years ago that since a calm occupation for her mind was desirable, she should learn music. Mrs. Barrycourt is an excellent musician. Eve learned with great rapidity. It gave her great pleasure, but she has lately grown a little weary of it; at times, too, music affects her as it did last night. A week ago the same gentleman advised us to find a new amusement for her—drawing. As yet, as you know, this experiment is untried."

"I hope it may succeed; poor child!"

"Thank you for that 'poor child,' Mr. Overseide," returned Miss Witchwood. "I am glad to see that you do not regret having to devote your abilities to the poor end of her amusement. You are ambitious, I daresay. Your pupil will be a difficult, wayward one to teach, and you will find no scope for your ambition. Properly, you should have been told her condition before you entered into this engagement, but it was impossible to inform you properly of it in a letter from one stranger to another, was it not?"

"Quite," said Godrey.

"Now that I have told you, Mr. Overseide, I leave the question entirely to you."

"What question, Miss Witchwood?"

"Whether you will go or whether you will stay with us."

Godrey felt a little hurt, though he did not know why.

"I will stay with you, Miss Witchwood," he said.

"I am much obliged to you, Mr. Overseide," she answered. "And now give me your arm, and let us hurry on to the Priory."

He obeyed her. He did not feel at his ease with Miss Witchwood resting on his arm. He was now more nervous than before in the presence of this beautiful lady, who had been, one might say, a strong-minded woman when she was but a child. He felt that his arm was unworthy of supporting her hand—that Julius Cæsar's arm, or Shakespeare's arm, would have been more fitted to the office.

While they walked he defined another impression given him by the presence of his mistress. The impression that, besides being very young, his character was dreadfully unsubstantial and shockingly frivolous.

She removed her veil from her face. He glanced at her for an instant, and he thought:

"I would not be called 'Noodles' in her hearing if I could be made an B.A. immediately afterwards."

Few words were spoken till they reached the Priory. The relation of her sister's sad story had evidently been an unpleasant task to Miss Witchwood, nor was Godrey inclined for conversation; he preferred thinking on what Miss Witchwood had told him, and defining the impressions she had given him.

They ascended a hill. On its summit was

what Godrey had taken from his bedroom window to be a farmhouse.

Miss Witchwood said, laughingly, as if she were performing the ceremony of introduction: "Pondcourt Priory, a very dear old friend of mine—Mr. Overseide. Mr. Overseide—Pondcourt Priory."

Godrey warmly expressed his admiration of the view from the eminence, and his veneration for the old Priory ruins, and with excellent reason. It was a delightful spot. Looking from a certain point Godrey found that only one habitation was visible—Pondcourt House. Looking from any point only one human being could he see—Miss Witchwood.

The sharp, pure air rouged her cheeks.

"I love this place," she said to Godrey, "yet my wretched eyes cannot see a tithe of its beauties."

Godrey glanced at her again.

"I can express Miss Witchwood at last in a single sentence," he thought. "She is an ideal queen."

They walked through the ruins of the Priory. A portion of them had been converted many years since into a farmhouse, which was now uninhabited and falling to decay.

The face of a woman who has loved a man for many years not infrequently bears a resemblance to his face. So it was with that farmhouse, Godrey fancied. At first it had seemed out of place there perhaps, but after a time the expression of antiquity, so evident on the ruins to which it was united, had fallen on the farm as well.

To any other woman Godrey would have mentioned and made much of this quaint fancy. To Miss Witchwood he only said:

"Your Augustine nunnery is better adapted to a thinker than a farmer, I should say."

They left the Priory and retraced their steps. Godrey felt that Miss Witchwood expected him to say something of himself. He had very little to say. He made an effort and said it, and not so awkwardly either as he had anticipated. The visit to the Priory had slightly benefited him.

He had no recollection of his parents, and Mr. Farrands had been and was his best and only friend. He had, like Miss Witchwood, the greatest respect for Mr. Farrands, but he regretted that although he (Godrey) owed all to him (the banker), he had little or no affection for his benefactor.

That was all that Godrey had to tell. There was no necessity to speak of his heart and his Annie, he thought, even if he had had sufficient courage. Miss Witchwood would laugh at him if he did, he knew. She could learn it from Mr. Farrands.

Gradually the conversation drifted back to the old subject—Eve Elworth's madness.

"Should you ever see her sleeping, Mr. Overseide," said Miss Witchwood, "you will observe what will probably shock you if I do not warn you of it. Not always, but very frequently, a pallor very like the pallor of death overspreads her face when she sleeps. Her body at these times is, or appears to be, motionless, her breath seems to stop, and the effect is very dreadful. To me especially so, for she looks so like my poor sister whose sad dead face came so often to me in my childish dreams. It is a weakness of which I am ashamed, but that death-like sleep is more painful to me than are her fits of madness."

Godrey understood now Eve's words, "Pray don't tell aunty."

"Why do you call its being painful to you a weakness on your part, Miss Witchwood?"

"Because it causes her no pain and does no harm," she answered. "The doctors assure me it means nothing. In a scientific manner which I could not thoroughly understand they have explained the causes of this odd, this dreadful phenomenon. They tell me that it has nothing to do with epilepsy, madness, or ill-health. It is a freak of nature—nothing more."

"I have one question to ask, Miss Witchwood," he said, "before we leave this sad subject. In teaching Miss Elworth is there anything that I am to observe? By what shall I regulate my conduct towards her?"

"By Mr. Overseide," she answered.

"You mean that I am to be perfectly natural?" he asked.

"Not exactly," returned Miss Witchwood. "I mean rather that your own feelings will be sufficient guide to your manner to her. I have an idea that you will understand my niece as well as any of us; besides, as I have told you already, her madness appears to be independent of anything we do or say. Let me warn you though against one thing, that is that you never exult in any way her affection for me."

Godrey was surprised.

"Her love for me," Miss Witchwood said, "is strangely and unnaturally intense; it is the love that I bore her mother multiplied a thousand fold by her strangeness. I have often discovered my niece shedding bitter tears. I have asked the cause. She has embraced me passionately and sobbed, 'Because I love you so—because I love you so.' I am forced to be careful not to excite this painful passion; I am forced sometimes to check it by assumed coldness and severity. Never encourage her to speak or think of her love for me, Mr. Overseide."

"I promise."

"Our excursion to the Priory," she said, as they entered the grounds of Pondcourt House, "has not been in vain. I feel that we know each other better now, and I think we shall be good friends."

"I hope so, Miss Witchwood, indeed I heartily hope so."

Nothing of any importance was said or done during the remainder of that day. Godrey employed the time between luncheon and dinner in writing a voluminous letter to Annie—a letter full of love and hope.

On the following morning after breakfast it was settled that the library should be used as the (literally) drawing-room.

Miss Elworth was very delighted and in gay spirits. At her aunt's request she repaired to the library first and arranged all the preliminaries.

Miss Witchwood walked as far as the library door with Godrey.

"Shall I be present, Mr. Overseide?" she asked.

"As you please. I have really no choice," he replied.

"Perhaps my presence will make her nervous," said Miss Witchwood; "I think we will try the first without the aunt."

"Very well," said Godrey.

Miss Witchwood shook his hand and whispered "Success," and then she walked away.

Godrey opened the door and entered the library. Eve was arranging the drawing materials on the table. When he entered she turned her eyes to his with a bright, intelligent smile.

"Now, Miss Elworth," he said, closing the library door, "for our first drawing lesson, if you please."

(To be Continued.)

BRONSON ALCOTT's latest instruction for his æsthetic disciples is that the purest food is fruit, and that, if animal food be eaten at all, it is best in the mild form of oysters and eggs. "Beautiful diet beautiful form!" he exclaims. "All pure poets have abstained almost entirely from animal food. Every animal feeder is sometimes a tyrant. If one would abate that fate he must omit it entirely, but by a gradual process. Compare a table of the present day with that spread by the hands of Eve in Paradise to feed her ethereal guests. Then was gathered together a feast of the purest, a banquet of right. We are composed of atoms, and every atom must be musical and tremulous with harmony to give the body that harmony that is musical. The consent of our atoms, the absolute consent of every atom to every other atom—that is harmony. Every passion leaves its impress, we know not how long. Every atom sympathises with every other atom."





["YOU HAVE LOST," SAID SHE, WITH A PRETTY AIR OF TRIUMPH.]

## POWER AND POVERTY.

A NEW NOVEL.

(BY OWEN LANDOR.)

## CHAPTER XIII.

## MYRA'S LOVE.

Oh, learn to love—the lesson is but plain,  
And once made perfect never lost again.

He who stood in the doorway of the cottage was no stranger either to Polly Stark or Myra, but both uttered an exclamation of surprise, and the elder woman turned away chuckling and muttering to herself.

"Ay! trust them to find us out. Where there's a will there's a way, sure enough. Missy in skates and he on horseback, I'll warrant, and here they are. I know their story."

"I scarcely expected to meet you here, Mr. Strongway," said Myra, as he advanced with his hat off.

She gave him her hand, which he took with a pleased smile and just the suspicion of a blush.

"Nor did I expect to see you, Miss Thurlie," he replied. "I rode out to the meet this morning, but the weather was against all sport and we were obliged to give it up. I was on my way home when my stirrup leather broke, and I knew Polly would be able to lend me one to replace it."

"Ay! or mend THAT broken one in a minute, Master Edgar Strongway," muttered the old woman.

"It was my intention," said Edgar Strongway, "to have ridden over to Deerland this afternoon."

"Indeed," returned Myra, indifferently.

"Sir Newton was good enough to invite me

to run over when I found the Moor House dull, and it is never anything else to me now."

"I have no doubt Sir Newton will be very glad to see you," said Myra, "and he will expect you to stop to dinner."

"I hope you will be back early," said Edgar, with a wistful look in his eyes.

"Yes—no—I cannot say," replied Myra. "There is a moon to-night, and skating is a thing I never tire of."

"And I am fond of it too," he said, eagerly. "It would not take me long to ride to Moor House and fetch my skates—"

"I really don't think I could wait so long."

"But you will wait awhile—say half an hour—and then I can overtake you."

"Do you think you CAN?" asked Myra, with a quiet smile.

"I'll try," he said; "and when a man puts his heart into anything he generally does it."

"And all your heart will be in following her," muttered Polly.

"Well, I don't think I will tax you so far," said Myra. "I want to speak to you on a subject that troubles me, or has at least excited my curiosity. We can talk about it as we go home."

"And you will really wait for me?"

"Not if you waste any time. Get home and back again as quick as you can."

He was off like an arrow from a bow, and Myra, with a smile that presently faded away to a look of sadness, sat down by the fire.

Polly went chuckling and muttering about the room like a female ogre in an amiable mood, until suddenly pulled up by a sharp query from Myra.

"What is the matter? You seem to be amused."

"It's not much of life I see, miss," said Polly, stopping short and courtesying, "and maybe I am amused at trifles."

"You are in this case, Polly."

"Is a man's heart a trifle? I can remember

the time when I thought it a big prize and worth winning."

"And did you ever win one?"

"Ay, miss, I did, and in a wanton moment threw it away. I never found it again, or another like it, and here I am—alone."

Polly was not as a rule given to sentimental utterances, but there was a little world of pathos in the way she said, "Here I am—alone!" Myra looked at her keenly for a moment, then turned to the fire again.

"You find it dull here, Polly, I suppose?"

"Now and then, when I THINK," was the reply, "but I don't do that often. I keep a doing and a-going from early morn till night. Then I'm worn out and sleep. So I get through the day and night without much trouble."

"I do not think I could live here as you do," Myra said.

"You must come to it bit by bit," Polly replied, "and there's the schooling of the heart to it that has to be carried out. But you may be lonely anywhere, miss—even in a big house full of friends, and with ne'er a want—BUT THE WANT OF A HEART THAT IS LOST, to trouble you."

"I suppose so," said Myra, dreamily; and then she fell into a musing mood, and Polly went out to look after her fowls.

In less than the time specified Edgar Strongway was back, a trifle out of breath, but with some running in him still.

"I have not lost a moment," he said, "and am ready to start at once."

"I think I will talk to you before we start," said Myra, "for after all we cannot promise to be able to converse while flying along at ten miles an hour or so. You know The Hollows."

"Yes; the place to let," replied Edgar, as he warmed his hands at the fire.

"It is let," rejoined Myra, "and to some queer people, I fear."

"Well, we need not call, and they will not trouble us," said Edgar, simply.

"I know that, but still I want to know all about them. Reuben has seen something of

them, and if you will give me a moment's attention I will tell you the story as it was told to me."

Edgar said he would give her a month's—a year's attention if she wished, and stood a quiet, attentive listener while Myra unfolded to him Reuben's experience and her own.

"Now," she said, in conclusion, "what do you make of it?"

"Nothing much, I'm afraid," he replied. "Perhaps it is some fellow a little wrong in the head and his friends are taking care of him."

"But they have no right to hide him away here," said Myra, impetuously. "The Hollows is not licensed for a private asylum."

"Still, I don't see how we can interfere."

"Not personally; but we can find out all about them, and if there is anything wrong we can put the authorities on their track. I am interested in this young fellow—"

"So I fear," said Edgar, ingenuously.

"Don't be foolish," returned Myra. "I am not in love with the man, for I have not even seen him, and I don't suppose I ever shall. I don't mean to fall in love with any man if I can help it."

"I wish you would fall in love with me," said Edgar.

"And then marry you and make you wretched ever afterwards," replied Myra. "Why, are you not content with your lot? You have your dogs and your horses and good health and nobody to thwart you in anything—"

"But I have not you," he said, "and I would gladly give up all the rest in exchange. Marry me, and if you never love me, I will at least teach you to respect me."

"Really," said Myra, stooping down and peering out of the window, "it is getting late, and as we are to travel together we had better get home before dark."

"Why don't you answer me?" he pleaded; "give me some ray of hope."

"Have I not told you often that I will not marry while my father lives?" said Myra, "and I hope he will be with me for twenty years at least."

"It is selfish of him to make a sacrifice of your young life," said Edgar, bitterly.

"He doesn't sacrifice me," returned Myra; "he advises me to marry, and he even recommends you. Come, is not that candid? But do I not know that when I leave Deerland he will be a desolate old man?"

"Can't we all live together?" blurted out Edgar. "I can sell or shut up Moor House."

"Really we must be going," said Myra. "Will you help me to adjust my skates?"

He knelt down and placed them on her dainty feet, then led her to the riverside. Polly came running after them to courtesy and say "Good bye."

"It's pleasant to have youth and strength," she said, "and the young are always good company. Good bye, Miss Myra and Master Edgar Strongway. I wish you safe every step of your journey."

They both laughed, and Edgar put half a sovereign into the old woman's hand, which she made some faint effort to thrust back upon him, but he glided out upon the ice, took Myra's hand, and together they sped away on the wings of the wind.

"When a fish is caught," the old woman muttered, "it is wise to play with it awhile, but not too long; he may get among the weeds and snap the line, and then there's no more fishing."

Conversation was not easy to the skating pair, but Edgar was very happy so long as he held Myra's hand in his; but ere long she drew it away and proposed they should have a race.

"It is now five miles to Deerland," she said. "Let us make that our goal. What start will you give me?"

"I'd rather not give any," he said.

"Fie upon your manhood to take a mean advantage of a girl."

"I don't want to give you any start because I wish to be with you all the way, but if you insist upon it you may have fifty yards."

"I'll take ten," said Myra, "and you may catch me if you can."

"And if I do," he asked, "what is to be my reward?"

"Do you really want one?"

"Nothing more than what I've asked for so long. Sir Newton could live with us, you know."

"Well, I'll make a bargain with you," replied Myra. "If you can catch me I'll give you a final yes or no. Mind, I don't say which."

"I'll risk it," said Edgar, turning pale. "It's better to know the end of it."

"You have to catch me first—don't forget that."

"I think I shall be able to do it."

"And now about starting. We must have it fair," said Myra. "I have a notion. Suppose we stand side by side—here, then I toss my handkerchief behind me, and you pick it up and follow? That will give me a good ten yards' start."

"Agreed."

They stood side by side, she with a smile on her face and he with a terribly earnest look. Myra rolled her handkerchief into a ball, then suddenly cast it behind her and sped away.

Edgar was a good skater and under less trying circumstances would have pounced on that handkerchief in a moment, and soon been close upon her heels, but now in his eagerness he slipped and fell, and Myra's musical laughter rang sweetly on the air.

But he was soon upon his feet and thrusting the handkerchief into his bosom sped after her, exerting himself to the utmost.

Myra's prowess on the ice was well known around and about Exmoor, but the wonderful speed she now displayed was a new thing to Edgar Strongway. In vain he threw all his prowess into his efforts to overtake her, the gap between them at the beginning remained unchanged to the end.

As they drew near Deerland Edgar thought he was gaining ground and he made a desperate effort to win the prize, but Myra immediately widened the gap between them and kept it unchanged until she turned aside and touched land near Sir Newton Thurlie's boat-house.

"You have lost," she said, with a pretty air of triumph.

"I have always thought you were an angel," he replied, "now I am sure of it. You have wings."

"That is very pretty, and I thank you," she said. "Please give me my handkerchief."

"Its return was not stipulated for. As a vanquished man I crave a boon. Let me keep it—at least for awhile."

"Will you give it me again if I ask for it?"

"Yes."

He took off her skates and his own and they hurried on towards Deerland with the cramped action that immediately follows skating. Myra seemed to be very merry and talked pleasantly, but Edgar was struggling with a great disappointment and was very dull. He hid his best however to hide his wretchedness.

Sir Newton saw them coming and came to the door to greet them. As he folded Myra in his arms and gave her a kiss Edgar mentally estimated what he would part with for a like privilege, and if he could have had his way his kiss would have been one of the most costly of sweet salutes.

"Glad to see you, Strongway," said Sir Newton, extending his hand. "So you managed to find Madcap?"

"The meeting was a pure accident," Myra hastened to say.

"No doubt," replied the baronet; "such meetings always are. But let us go in; there is some tea ready for us."

It was waiting for them in Myra's boudoir, a place Edgar had never been privileged to enter before. Myra, with a pretty little courtesy, invited him thither, and he had half an hour's unalloyed happiness, listening to her voice, drinking tea out of delicate cups, mere egg-shells of chinaware, and eating bread and butter thinner than the now almost neglected wafer.

Then he was dismissed and sauntered away

with the baronet, who took him to the smoking-room and brought out a box of cigars.

"Your man hasn't come with your things yet," he said, "and you can dress in twenty minutes. Have a weed."

Edgar took one, and drawing up easy chairs to the fire they sat down. Sir Newton grumbled at the cold and hoped the frost would soon break.

"It is hard upon us here," he said, "to be shut out from the only thing that breaks the monotony of our existence. Without hunting Exmoor would be a desert."

"It's dull enough," Edgar replied, "as I find it—the Moor House is, I mean. I wish I could get a mistress for it."

"Myra still deaf to you?" said Sir Newton, pinching his cigar and looking at it suspiciously. It did not draw to his satisfaction.

"Sae will neither hold me nor let me go," said Edgar, mournfully. "I can't make her out at all. She says— But I ought not to tell you that."

"What is it? You need not be reticent in speaking to me."

"Well, it seems she won't leave you, and I told her that she need not. I am sure, Sir Newton, you and I could live under one roof without wrangling."

"Of course we could, Edgar—but the question is which roof?"

"The Moor House is big enough. A regiment of cavalry could be quartered there. I live in one corner of it, but perhaps you would not care to leave Deerland?"

"Has Myra empowered you to enter into an arrangement with me?" asked Sir Newton, quickly.

"That's where it is," said Edgar, fretfully, "she has not. But she does not forbid me to speak of my love for her or drive me away. And now she has given me a new commission."

"What is that?"

"To find out something about a young fellow at The Hollows, and I don't think I shall trouble myself about it."

"Oh, yes, you will."

"Why should I?"

"Because Myra wishes you to do so. Tomorrow you will be hunting up all the information you can and be over here in the evening with it."

"I suppose I shall," said Edgar, ruefully rubbing his head. "She wants me to call there in the ordinary way."

"Just like a woman. If the proprieties admitted she would go herself."

"I can only be refused. I don't suppose they will rush out and murder me. The Hollows always had a bad name. No good ever seems to come to the people who take it. However, I'll go, and as Myra will be anxious I'll come over tomorrow afternoon with the result of my call."

Edgar then dropped the subject, and the favourite and unflattering topic of Exmoor was brought upon the board. Old stories were retold and received with as much pleasure as if they were new, criticisms of the past and hopes of the future indulged in until the first gong warned them it was time to dress.

"Your old room," said Sir Newton, "you know your way."

"Thanks," cried Edgar, as he bolted out of the room.

He knew if he hurried with his dressing he could get ten minutes with Myra alone in the drawing-room before Sir Newton came down.

Myra was very pleasant with him all the evening. She talked and smiled and sang, and he hung upon every word and note that fell from her lips. If she had asked him to walk into a fiery furnace for her sake he would have done it.

His man had brought over his horse, and at eleven o'clock he rose to leave.

"I shall just have time to get home before the moon goes down," he said, "to-morrow I shall return and bring with me the history of the mystery of The Hollows."

"Mind you do," Myra replied, "and be particular about anything which concerns the handsome young fellow."



"Oh, of course you want to know about him," said Edgar, biting his lip.

"How can you be so foolish?" she asked, in an undertone.

He looked into her eyes and saw something there that sent him away with a heart lighter than a feather.

"I shall win her yet," he cried, exultingly, as he galloped away from the house, "and then I shall want nothing more. Oh! Myra, my love—my love!"

He was terribly in earnest, and his love was deep. What if there should be further disappointment in store for him? How would he bear it?

He rode recklessly that night, but he had a good horse, and no accident happened to him. On the morrow early in the afternoon he was on his way to Deerland again, with a limited amount of information concerning the people of The Hollows to impart.

Sir Newton and Myra were looking out for him—the former with ill-concealed anxiety, and the latter with amused curiosity.

"Well, what have you to tell me?" asked Myra. "Did you call?"

"Yes," replied Edgar. "I called and saw nobody but an attendant, who looked like a prize-fighter dressed up as a waiter. I gave him my card and asked to see the head of the house. I could not ask for him by name as I did not know it."

"Well, what followed?" exclaimed Myra. "How slow you are. Did you see the handsome one?"

"No. I saw nobody but the disguised prize-fighter, who told me that his master was a foreign count or lord, I forget which he said, who had taken the place to study astronomy with his pupils, and he had no time to give to friends or acquaintances."

"Cool," said Sir Newton.

"Very. But the fellow put it in a way that effectually barred me from pursuing my visit any further. So leaving my card I came back."

"Is that all?" asked Myra.

"All?" repeated Edgar, "isn't it enough? You can see we are not wanted."

"But I don't believe in that story about astronomy a bit."

"Seems to be a cock-and-bull sort of affair," said Sir Newton. "Did you see any telescopes or anything of that sort about?"

"I saw nothing but the man and about six inches of the doormat," replied Edgar Strongway. "The man only opened the door about six inches, and he seemed uncommonly surprised to see me. I fancy some watch-dog fellow at the Gaunt must have been asleep."

"Edgar," said Myra, suddenly, "I am sure there is something wrong about these people. I am not very romantic, you know, but I am conscious of there being a lot of crime in the world, half of which is never found out, and if there is anything in the way of villainy going on at The Hollows we must thwart it. We can't have Exmoor made a hiding-place for crime."

It was the first time she had ever called him by his Christian name, and it slipped out in an easy way that delighted him. He was sure she had thought of him as Edgar, and his strong frame trembled with joy.

"I'll do my best," he said, "to get at the bottom of it."

"If you do that you cannot fail," she replied. "And if I succeed?" he asked, dropping his voice.

"I will never set you another task," she replied. And he knew then that he had his goal straight before him.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### THE SECRET COIL.

And he would face the blame of just men's eyes,  
And bear the blame of falsehood all his days,  
And wear out a scorned life with useless lies,  
So base and shifting is he in his ways.

It was six o'clock, and the warehouse of Messrs. Cranbury, Rose, and Co. was on the

point of being closed. The only two persons remaining were David Gray and Job Murch.

The head clerk, Mr. Mellor, was away for a day with a cold, and David having double work on his hands, was a little late.

Murch was merely waiting until he finished to close and lock the doors. He anticipated half an hour's waiting and was in no good humour over it, for it was one of Peggy's visiting days at home, and he knew he should find her there.

But David Gray could get through work at a wonderful rate when he put his shoulder to the wheel, and at ten minutes past six he turned out the gas of the counting-house and came down to the warehouse, putting on his coat as he walked.

"I know it's a day when you want to be home, Murch," he said, "and I am sorry I've been obliged to keep you."

"And how do you know I want to get home, sir?" asked Murch.

"Well, I have heard you say that your daughter comes to see you once a month, and once a month I've noticed you to be brighter than usual, and I've set down that day for her visit. To-day you've been quite lively, for instance."

"Have I?" said Murch, eyeing him suspiciously. "Well, I must say, Mr. Gray, that you are a sharp 'un."

"I've had to look about me all my life," replied the clerk, "and that has improved my eyesight no doubt."

He was going out and Murch had clambered upon the warehouse counter to turn out the gas-jet when he pulled up and looked back.

"As I was passing through the warehouse to-day," he said, "I fancied I heard you say your daughter was ill. What's the matter with her?"

"Nothing as we can lay hold of, sir," replied Murch. "She gets into a sort of stupid way, and sits staring at you for minutes together, and when she comes out of the fits she's regularly done."

"Have you had a doctor to her?"

"Lor' bless you, sir, Mrs. Cranbury and Miss Rose bean't the ladies to let her go without that. She's had two or three to look at her, but they only look wise and do nothing. Now a friend of Mrs. Cranbury's, a party as I don't think much of, has took her in hand."

"Well! put the gas out. I'm going part of your way, and you can tell me about it as we go along."

Murch with all speed closed the warehouse, and choosing the more quiet of the streets the two men wended their way to the Blackfriars Road.

"So a friend of Mrs. Cranbury's has taken your daughter in hand?" said David Gray; "who is it?"

"A gentleman as you may have seen, sir," replied Murch. "He calls himself Count Orsera."

It was not a nice distinction to make. Murch did not say that he was not Count Orsera, only that "he called himself" by that name. People of a higher order of intellect than the warehouse porter often indulge in some sort of back-handed hitting.

"I know the man," said David, thoughtfully. "What does he do?"

"He used to rub her head and hands in a curious sort of way, sir, and now he's giving her medicine, but he's mighty mean with it."

"How do you mean?"

"Why, he makes her keep the bottle, sir, and as soon as it is emptied she gives it back to him and he fills it again."

"What sort of medicine is it—dark or light—strong or weak?"

"It's just like nothing, and Peggy says it's no more than so much water."

"And does it do her any good?"

"Not as we can see at present, but the count says her system is preparing for a change and she will soon be as well as ever."

"And how long has this been going on?"

"Nigh on two months, sir; but here we are at Johnson's Street, and I'll say good night, sir."

"Murch, may I drop into your place for a

moment?" said David Gray. "I've a fancy for seeing your daughter."

"Come and welcome, sir," said Murch. "It's a poor place, but them as come are free and welcome."

"I shall not pretend to do her any good," said Gray, "but I have some slight knowledge of medicine and may be able to guess what is the matter with her. I was a medical student for two years, Murch."

"Lor! was you now, sir? And only think that you are a clerk now and might have been living in a big house and charging people a guinea to see you for two minutes. The world is all ups and downs."

"To some of us it is all down," said David Gray, too softly for Murch to hear.

Peggy and her lover and Mrs. Murch were laughing and chatting as the two men entered the room, and at the first glance Peggy looked as rosy and buxom as ever. It was only when subjected to close examination that her eyes showed a weariness in their depths, and her cheeks a slight leaden hue under the brighter colour.

"Mr. Gray," said Murch, addressing them generally; "a gentleman of our counting-house. He was passing and thought he'd just pay his respects."

David Gray was almost quality in Mrs. Murch's eyes, and with all speed she placed a chair for him by the fire. He shook hands with her and with Peggy, and would have done the same with Tomkins, but the greengrocer being of a bashful, not to say ashamed, turn of mind, backed a little and grinned with his arms hanging down by his side.

"Well, lass!" said Murch to Peggy, "how be ye?"

"Better to-day," she replied, "and what makes it odd, father, is that I have been about all day with Ben and mother and forgot to take my medicine."

"And yet the count said you was never to miss it!"

"Yes. I see him almost every day, and he always asks if I have taken my medicine."

"I know a little of drugs," said David Gray, "and I am interested in all medicines. Have you yours with you?"

"Yes, sir," replied Peggy.

"May I look at it?"

She took a small phial from a hand-bag on the table and gave it to him. He drew out the cork, smelt the contents, tasted slightly and recorked the bottle.

"I should like to keep this," he said; "the contents, I mean, and as you are so much the better for not taking the physis I should in future only pretend to take it."

"Pretend!" echoed Peggy.

"Why not?" asked David Gray. "Doctors are often mistaken as to the disease they attempt to treat, and I think the count is mistaken. He passes his hands across your eyes in this way, does he not?"

"Yes, and I get quite lost sometimes, but he says he does me good."

"Another mistake of his. Mesmerising you, that is what he is practising on you, is not good for you. It is a dangerous thing to bring into play at any time, unless you exercise it upon such a strong man as Mr.—Mr.—"

"Tomkins," said Peggy.

"As Mr. Tomkins, who could come to no possible harm by it."

"I am not afraid of it," said Ben Tomkins, valiantly.

"But I don't like it," said Mrs. Murch, "and I've told Peggy so. Ever since the count put her off in the kitchen at Christmas time I've had my doubts of him."

"But master is so wrapped up in him," urged Murch, "and he ought to know. He's a friend of Lord Mowbray's, too."

"Ah!" said David, "that's worth knowing. Now are we all friends here?"

"All," they said.

"And we ought to hold Mr. John dear in our memories?"

No doubt of this, they all tearfully declared. "Mr. John was murdered," pursued David

Gray, "and all the police can do has ended in failure. I expected it. But there's no reason why we shouldn't find it out. I suspect two people I know."

"Maybe we suspect one," said Murch.

"He's a lord?"

"Yes."

"So is mine, Murch, and the other has a title too—say a count. Well, I see by your looks that you don't see what grounds I have to suspect him. No more can I very clearly, but suspect him I do, and I mean to follow him up. Will you join with me and help me? I've been looking about for help for a long time, and have only now found it."

"I'm ready, sir, to do ANYTHING to bring the villains to justice," said Murch, and so they all said.

"Good," replied David Gray; "then we may consider part of our work done. But we must have a leader. Will you be guided by me?"

"Mother," said Murch, "what do you say?"

"I think we ought to take it kindly of Mr. Gray to make the offer," replied Mrs. Murch; "we've been doing as much as we could by ourselves and we have only bungled it."

"Very well, then, I'm your leader," said David Gray. "Now for instructions. First, to you, Peggy—you don't mind my calling you Peggy, I hope?"

"Oh, no, sir."

"And Mr. Tomkins won't be jealous, for I am getting an old man and my courting days are over."

Mr. Tomkins feebly grinned, and Mrs. Murch expostulated:

"Lawk, sir, you getting old—a long way from your prime yet, sir."

"So be it. Then I'll say that, much as I admire Peggy, I am not going to cut out our friend here. My instructions to you, Peggy, are—to play a game with the count, pretend to take his physic, but empty the MEDICINE into another bottle and keep it for me. You must also deceive him in that mesmerism business."

"How shall I do that, sir?"

"Do not YIELD yourself to his influence. When he begins to exercise his power over you think of something else far away. FORCE yourself to do it, and PRETEND to fall asleep. I can see you have something in you, and can do this much."

"I'll try, sir."

"He does not attempt to make an exhibition of you now?"

"No, sir, but he wants me to go to Broken Hall one day, alone. He says he has a friend interested in cases like mine, who would like to see me."

"Dare you go?"

"I think so, sir," said Peggy, after a moment's reflection. "I don't see why I should be afraid."

"When you go your friends must know. Select one evening, and then Mr. Tomkins, your father, and myself will watch outside. If you are not out in a given time—say an hour or so—we will come in after you."

"Rather," muttered Ben Tomkins, breathing hard and making demonstrations at an imaginary foe with his fist.

"But I do not think it will come to that," said David Gray, "your going will of course be known to your mistress and they are not likely to attempt any personal violence. All you have to do is to SHAM well and take note of what is done in your supposed dream. He will probably ask you questions about what people are doing far away, and I leave it to your ready wit to furnish the answers."

"She'll carry it through," said Murch, proudly. "She's like her mother—equal to anything."

"For the rest," said David Gray, "I can only recommend for the present that perfect silence be kept. Confide in no one. But remember I shall be moving in the matter, and I think, with the aid of some people I know, who have nothing particular to do, be able to keep an outside watch on the count."

"Miss Janet used to like him and his sister,"

said Peggy, "but lately she can't endure 'em. There's something wrong about that woman. Her eye is evil. You should have seen her look at Lord Mowerby last night when he walked in."

"He came unexpected, I suppose," muttered David Gray.

"Quite so, and I don't think he expected to see anybody. I was in the drawing-room, having been sent to fetch an album from Miss Janet, and I saw how they all started. But they pretended to be strangers did the dark-eyed woman and my lord, and they were introduced as such, but they've met before many a time."

"I am afraid there is a dark story at the back of all this," said David Gray, "and in my opinion—but hark! isn't that a knock at your door?"

"I fancy I know that knock," said Janet.

"None of our people," said Mrs. Murch; "they don't come it like that. Go and see, Murch, who it is."

Murch got up very slowly, as if he did not half like the task, and disappeared, leaving the door slightly ajar.

They heard him draw back the lock and ask who was there. A voice with a foreign accent answered him.

David Gray, who was looking at Janet, saw that she was deadly pale.

"You know who it is," he said.

"Yes," she answered, "but how did he know that we live here?"

"Who is it?" asked Mrs. Murch.

"The count," Peggy replied, with a shudder, and drew back as that mysterious gentleman, accompanied by Murch in a dazed state, entered the room.

(To be Continued.)

## FACETIÆ.

### CANDID.

COUNSEL: "Why are you so very precise in your statement? Are you afraid of telling an untruth?"

WITNESS (promptly): "No, sir." Punch.

### A REBUKE.

FAIR BRIDE OF NINETEEN SUMMERS: "What can they all see in her? I'm sure she's over thirty; and no woman is worth looking at after that!"

MATRON (age unknown): "Nor worth speaking to before, my dear!" Punch.

### SCENE—At a locked gate.

TIMID SPORTSMAN on WEEDY MOUNT (to rustic on gate): "Now then, m'lad, take that gate off its hinges, will yer?"

RUSTIC: "What'll yer giv' me?"

SPORTSMAN: "A copper, p'r'aps."

RUSTIC (preparing to cut): "Then I'm blessed if yer ain't as big a screw as yer 'oss!" [Cuts off.] Punch.

VERY LIKELY.—The Irish Land Act will probably be known as the 44th and 45th of Evictoria, Cap. 49. Punch.

### FANCY!

ELDERLY PARTY: "Be kind enough to keep your dog a little further off my leg."

DOG FANCIER: "What for?"

ELDERLY PARTY: "Don't want to be bit."

DOG FANCIER: "My dorg won't bite—he only nibbles, and in general he's a clean feeder!" Moonshine.

WATER WORKS.—Temperance tales. Moonshine.

RELIGIOUS WRITES.—Sermons. Moonshine.

THE WHITE HOUSE.—A snow hut. Moonshine.

UPPER STORIES.—Fashionable novels. Moonshine.

THE BEST FIGURE FOR BETTING MEN.—The figure won (one). Judy.

### HEAR, HEAR!

"What a pack o' nonsense some parties do talk!" says Mrs. O'Brallaghan. "Look here now—'The anchor is generally looked upon as the emblem of hope.' What rubbish! Just as if anybody would trust to that, when everyone knows it only holds on by a fluke!" Judy.

### NOT PARTICULAR TO A HAIR.

SOME people are never satisfied with letting well alone, they must overdo it. A gentleman, who signs himself "Sportsman," writes to Mrs. J. complaining that his greyhounds are in such wonderfully high training that they are quite useless, because they run for miles without turning a hare. Judy.

An upholsterer's life should be one devoted to the performance of chair-et-table objects. Judy.

### A SHORT ANSWER.

YOUNG SWELL (who was tired of waiting): "Ostler, how long will my horse be?"

OSTLER (busy): "Same length as he was when you left 'im, sir, and he'll be ready in a minit." Judy.

WHAT letter of the alphabet is best fitted to govern Ireland?—L is (Ellis), of course. How dull you are! Judy.

### PRO-BOSCIS PUBLICO!

THE new nose machine turns out Grecians or Romans or retrousés to order, so beware how you make fun of a man with a "pug," for you don't know yourself what may turn up.—Judy.

A NON-LITIGANT POPULATION.—The people who live in Concord (Mass.). Fun.

### IN THE LUMP.

("SOLIDIFIED WINE AND BRANDY.—An Italian has invented a process for solidifying wine. I may add that a chemist has found a chemical combination by which he can solidify and even crystallise brandy.")

SHOPMAN: "Anything else to-day, madam?" LADY: "Let me see. You've put down a quarter-pound of amontillado and one and a half pounds of tarragona! I think I'll have a quarter ounce of the best maraschino, two ounces of cognac, and half a pound of old Irish whiskey." Fun.

### PROOF POSITIVE.

MASTER: "Tam?"

MAN: "Awheel?"

MASTER: "Ye wis terrable fou at the market yestreen, Tam?"

MAN: "Nae sae fou's ye wis yersel'!"

MASTER: "Me fou, ye impudent—"

MAN: "Ay, wis ye! Ye'll no mind it; but ye gied the siller for a dram tae me, and aye to Sandy, oot o' yer ain pooch. What think ye o' that?" Fun.

### CON.

WHAT did Wellington do when he wore his boots out?—Wore them home again. Funny Folks.

THE 'HOLE END OF EXISTENCE.—A grave. Funny Folks.

### LIBERAL "CONSERVE"—ATIVES.

AUNT TOWZER is surprised that the present Liberal Government, headed by Mr. Gladstone, should think of such a thing as to bring in that bill for the "Conservancy of Rivers." Funny Folks.

### YOUTH AND USURY.

A YOUNG money-lender is an anomaly; his business more befits a man advancing in age. Funny Folks.

A CAPITAL OF FOUR AND A HALF MILLIONS.—London. Funny Folks.

### BEYOND QUESTION.

It is strange that prisoners in our Courts of Law are not personally cross-examined, considering that they are generally such questionable characters. Funny Folks.



POST-MORTEM EXAMINATION.—Opening a dead letter. Judy.

#### THE GOOD GIRL.

PERSISTENT PARTY: "Not at home? But are you sure he isn't? Don't you think you had better go and ask him?"

NEW MAID: "No, sir; it wouldn't be a bit of good. He told me he wasn't distinctly." Judy.

#### HOW IT'S DONE.

GUARD: "How? Why, I sorts out a hare, or a partridge, here and there. Bless you, the parties they send 'em to never dreams—when they writes to thank 'em—never dreams o' sayin' how many they got!" Judy.

A "DARKNESS WHICH MAY BE 'FELT.'"—A black hat. Judy.

#### THE SCRIPTURE LESSON.

YOUNG LADY: "And whocomes after Esther?" (A pause.) "Is it Job?"

PUPIL: "No, miss; Billy Piper's big brother, I see him a Sunday." Judy.

WHAT KIND OF PLAY DOES AN OLD TOPPER RESEMBLE?—A melodrama (a mellow dram-er)—nem! Judy.

#### FISHES FOR FOOD.

FISH is being again put forward as the best and most nourishing food for those who do brain work. Not only so, but different kinds of fish best suit certain classes of brain-workers. Thus, politicians should eat plaice; poets, sole; musical composers, cods' sounds; surveyors, perch; missionaries, "natives;" Cambrian cards, whales; and so on, each of us, according to our calling, thus obtaining the particular "phos-for-us" Nature intended us to have. Fun.

#### ABSENCE OF MIND.

THE most surprising case we have recently heard of is that of the old seafaring gentleman who on arriving at an hotel began to unpack himself, and only found out his mistake on arriving at the "bottom of his chest" without coming to his boots. Fun.

A "PAS DE DEUX."—The father of twins. Fun.

HOW TO MAKE CHICKEN SALAD.—Out of "heny"—thing. Fun.

#### NOT IN-JAW-RIOUS.

A MAN was shot at in Clerkenwell, but was saved by the bullet lodging in his false teeth. A fine instance of tooth-stopping! Still, the saving of life was purely accidental. Funny Folks.

#### "FEIGNING IS THE LOVER'S ART."

CLARISSA: "Why, Harry, 'Truth' says that men 'make up' just as the ladies do."

HARRY: "Well, and what then?"

CLARISSA: "But surely you don't 'make up'? I should hate you if you did."

HARRY: "Love me, you mean? For I must plead guilty to the charge; but then, I only 'make up' to you!" Funny Folks.

LORD SALISBURY'S FAVOURITE RETREAT.—"Far from the Rad-ding crowd." Funny Folks.

HARMLESS COLLISION.—When two "trains of thought" run into each other. Funny Folks.

## BELLA'S HERO:

A STORY OF

## THE WELSH MARCHES.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### THE WILL, AND WHAT FOLLOWED.

THERE was general surprise at the Castle, and among the citizens, when Colonel Fitz Eustace appeared among the chief mourners

at the funeral of the late marquis. He did not occupy a position at the side of the young lord as he had desired and planned, but he held a place given only to near relatives, and he was content.

On the return from the funeral Roderic met the old family attorney in the library, where the servants and retainers were assembled to hear the will of the old marquis read. Fitz Eustace was not there. He had said to the new master:

"No, my lord, I will not intrude. The will can be nothing to me. Of course, my name cannot appear; and I would not have it do so. If, in the time to come, you shall choose to recognise the relationship by giving to me a living, I shall be more than satisfied. And I shall find no fault if you pay no further attention than simply to grant me your brotherly love and good-will. You can tell me of the will at some future time."

What could the marquis say to this? He felt uncomfortable. He distrusted the man—he could not help it. And yet there was a possibility that he was honest.

Roderic did not wish to make a mistake. It would be very unpleasant to openly condemn him and then to find him innocent. He could only wait, trusting that all would be made clear before mischief could result.

The will was read, and found to be very simple. The bulk of the property—the whole of Mendon, including the Castle and the village, went with the title. Concerning this the testator touchingly said:

"To my son and successor I leave my name, my title, and all thereto absolutely belonging, trusting that he will so honour the one and use the other that he shall prove himself a blessing to his people."

To his son Arthur he left the mines in Wales, worth ten thousand pounds a year, besides fifty thousand pounds in money, to be made up from such stocks, bonds, and moneys as the executors should find it most convenient and profitable to use.

Besides this, Arthur would enjoy another fifty thousand pounds which came to him from his maternal grandfather, and which had been his to draw upon since his majority, now little more than a year past.

Also, the younger son was recommended to the love and protection of the elder; and in this paragraph the testator had not sought to conceal his own shortcomings, and consequently regrets, in that respect.

Following this were bequests to the faithful servants, none of whom were forgotten.

The will bore date January first of that year—little over a month and a half before the testator's decease.

There was a codicil, dated the first of that present month, giving to "George Conway, son of the Widow Mabel Conway, and faithful friend of my son Arthur, the sum of five thousand pounds, to be paid from the Three per Cent. Consolidated Annuities, now on deposit with my bankers at Shrewsbury."

The old attorney of the family was named as executor, with full power to name one to act in his place in case of inability.

That night the young marquis sat up till a late hour with the attorney.

This latter was a man of full three-score-and-ten, but healthful and vigorous, his physical and mental faculties seemingly unimpaired, named Abram Lawrence. He had been a young practitioner when Roderic's father had entered into possession of the vast estate, but he had executed the legal business even then.

He regarded Mendon as his one client of importance, to be honoured and attended to above and before all other things; and he had come to feel himself responsible, in a measure, for its safety.

And, in fact, had Abram Lawrence been so disposed, he could have so shattered the fortunes

of the house that no other human power could have brought them back to order again, at least not intact.

However, the man was sternly honest; and, at heart, at that moment, cared more for the weal and stability of the lordship than did its present master.

The first thing which the marquis had to present was the case of George Conway; and with this, in due course, came the story of Colonel Fitz Eustace.

The old lawyer listened patiently, allowing Roderic to go on undisturbed until he had made an end of his story; and when that had been done he had told all he could remember of the strange absence of young Conway, of the connection of Fitz Eustace therewith, and of the despatch of Robert Bowman upon his mission.

Bowman had been gone four days and nothing had been heard from him.

Then Mr. Lawrence commenced to ask questions. He sought to discover if the colonel had told a perfectly straight story. And then if his story, as told, tallied exactly with known facts.

A full hour was thus consumed, at the end of which time the old man said, very slowly and methodically:

"My lord, I should hold this man at a respectful distance. We know that Lady Elizabeth married for her second husband Colonel Francis Fitz Eustace, and that she went with him from America to India. Furthermore, we know that she had a son, at that time living, by her first husband. Lady Elizabeth died, in Calcutta, in eighteen hundred and fourteen—eighteen years ago; and that Colonel, then General Fitz Eustace, her second husband, died in 'twenty-two—ten years ago; and the son was living then. This I learned, by patient research, as a matter of duty to the house I have so long served; and I communicated it to your father six years, or more, ago. Of that son I have heard not a word for just about six years. It is my firm belief that he is not living. Still, I may be mistaken. We must not act upon my suspicion, though such suspicion may temper our action. We must find what young Conway knows. Evidently he is in possession of a key to the mystery. If you have correctly repeated his language to yourself, I am sure he possesses it."

"You may depend upon what I told you, sir."

"Then George Conway must be found. You must allow me to set a proper detective to the work. I am sorry you did not do it at first."

"You must remember, sir, that I only had suspicion to go upon."

"But, my lord, a well-grounded suspicion."

"I don't know about that, sir," said Roderic, with a dubious shake of the head. "If you had had Colonel Fitz Eustace to deal with you might have been confounded as I was."

"Perhaps so. I will not dispute you. But you will allow me to take my own course now?"

"Yes, with all my heart."

"And if young Bowman should return with his report you will send him to me at once—without delay?"

The marquis promised.

"And now," said the old attorney, "what is the other matter upon which you wished to consult me?"

Roderic Graham bent his head, and a perceptible quiver shook his frame. After a time he looked up and spoke.

"Dear old friend, you do not know my secret. But I can reveal to you that my days are numbered and I am liable to be called away at any time, though not suddenly. I have a cancer of the stomach. Doctor Tobey discovered it more than a year ago, and he proposed to summon two eminent physicians from London; but I knew that Sir Astley Cooper was a dear friend of my father, and I believed he would know my

condition. I wrote to him, and he bade me come and see him. I went. He made an examination, asked a few questions, and then shook his head. He told me to come home, to let stimulating food alone, to let wine alone, and to drink as much boiled milk and cream and oatmeal porridge as my appetite craved. There would be no use in my taking coarse solid food, because I could not dispose of it. He could not say how long I might live, but he thought not more than two or three years, though I might live on far beyond that.

"However, I feel that I am failing. I have not let wine alone. There are times when it seems as though I could not live without it. But enough of that. Pyloric cancer is my trouble; and no power of earth can cure it. Oh! if Arthur would come! I will live till I have seen him, if I can!"

The old lawyer had nothing to say. He could only look in sorrow and pray that his young client's prayer might be answered, which he did audibly.

However, before he took his leave he had promised that he would leave nothing undone which lay in his power to do for the good of Mendon and its lord.

It was on the morning following the conversation of the marquis and the old attorney, while Roderic of Mendon sat alone in his library, engaged in looking over a lot of old papers, that Robert Bowman was announced. He leaped to his feet, and directed the servant to admit him at once.

And he met the youth at the door and led him in by the hand. But the lad's face was far from exultant. His look was downcast and dissatisfied.

"Well, Robert, what luck?"

"Ah! my lord, I have to acknowledge myself a dolt!—a dolt! I have been tricked, completely so! And I come back no better off than I went."

"Well, well," said the marquis, cheerily, for he pitied the poor boy in his deep distress, "let me hear what you have done. And, my dear boy, do not be disheartened. I did not expect you to perform impossibilities."

"Ah, sir! if I had been sensible, if I had not lost my head! But you shall hear."

He took breath, reflected for a little time, and then went on:

"You know when and how I left you. Well, sir, on that very day toward noon I made sure that I was upon the track of the men I sought. I described the team and the two men, and they had been seen on the Walton turnpike. The pike-keeper gave me their descriptions exactly; and he said they had a poor maniac in charge, whom he said they were taking to an asylum. You can judge how my heart leaped. Well, sir, I followed my team—the carriage, and the two white-faced horses—as far as Bridgenorth, which I reached about nine o'clock that evening, forty miles distant.

"At Bridgenorth I learned that the party had reached that place about an hour before noon, and had stopped only an hour, to rest and feed their horses. Of course, I would not start off again at that hour, so I waited there until morning; but was off at daybreak. At the distance of fifteen miles from Bridgenorth I came to a small village of Wilton, where my team had stopped again. And here, at Wilton, the party had remained until far into the evening, and had then started on again.

"Well, sir, I was upon the track of the carriage and I followed it two days and two nights; and at length, within twenty miles of London, I came up with it to find—the carriage and the horses, but they were strangers who had come in it. Three men had come in it, and one of them I spoke with. I reached the point I wished to be informed upon as delicately as I could. He seemed to understand the situation perfectly. He laughed in my face, and laughed heartily. And then he told me that he had exchanged teams with a party at Wilton! He said he had met two physicians there, who had in charge a poor, deranged patient, and they wanted a lighter vehicle. And he said that he had had a vehicle which pleased them; and they had struck up

a bargain on the spot. He had taken the carriage, and the powerful white-faced horses, and had come on.

"I asked him what kind of a carriage he had let the doctors have; and I will only say, his impudent grin gave me to understand that, if these men were not direct accomplices, they were in possession of the whole truth. The man pretended to give me a description of the carriage—a market-waggon he called it, but I placed no reliance upon it.

"Enough to say, further, of these men, I got out of their way as soon as I could. I became afraid of them. Be sure, sir, there is an organised gang of these freebooters, and these men were members of it. Well, I made the best of my way back to Wilton, and there I found that the exchange had taken place. A boy of the inn had overseen the transaction.

"And now which way had the light, covered waggon gone with the insane patient in it? The boy assured me that he had seen it, late at night, start off to the northward by a narrow bye-way that led into the woods. On the next morning, yesterday, I took that road, and followed it until I came to where it branched off in two directions, almost at right angles, and opposite to one another—one leading east and the other west. I took the right-hand path, and followed it until I had made sure that no carriage had passed that way. Then I retraced my steps and took the other road; and—

"Here I am, sir! Where George Conway is I cannot tell you. Oh! I could have died willingly when I knew I had been tricked! But I could not help it!"

"Not a word more, Robert. You have done well. I know I should not have done better. Ay, you have done a thousand times better than you know. But I will not waste precious time in questioning you. At some time you shall tell me the whole story of your adventures, but we have better work on hand now. You know the old attorney, Mr. Lawrence?"

"Yes, sir."

"You will find him at his home, at Bishop's Castle. Do you go to the stable, or have you had breakfast?"

"No, my lord."

"Then go down and get your breakfast at once. Then go and take a fresh horse, and ride swiftly to Bishop's Castle, and find Mr. Lawrence. Tell him I sent you. And then tell to him the story you have told to me. He will tell you what is next to be done. He wants to put a detective on the track at once; and he wants to hear your story as soon as he can."

"Ah! sir, we ought to have thought of that!"

"Pshaw! The keenest detective of them all might have been deceived, as you were. I tell you you did well; and the more I think of it the more I am so persuaded. Now away you go. You have your errand."

"But, sir, I have left of your money—"

"Silence! Show me any of the money and I'll make you eat it! Never show it to me. Now hurry! That's a good boy! I tell you you have done nobly. And see if Lawrence doesn't say so too."

With this Robert Bowman, feeling vastly better than he did when he entered, turned and left the library, and in fifteen minutes from that time he was in the saddle again and on the road to Bishop's Castle.

"Good!" cried the old attorney, when young Bowman had told him his story. "You have done grandly."

The lad, who had entered crestfallen and trembling, looked up in astonishment.

"Ah, sir! God knows I wish I could have done something. My heart was right; but when I had got at the work, and found what old and experienced rascals could do, I began to discover my own littleness."

The veteran practitioner patted Robert kindly on the shoulder, bluffly responding as he did so:

"My dear boy, you will make me think that your judgment is a slave to unfounded terrors. Why, bless your body! the most expert and

experienced of all the detectives I ever knew have been thrown from the track by tricks far more transparent than was that practised upon you. No, no, Master Robert, you have no reason to be ashamed. I cried 'Good' and I meant it. You looked at me as though you didn't know what I could have found in your report to be thankful for. Ha! It is much! much, my boy! You have proved the very thing in question; and let me tell you that many a man might have gone out and not found it. You have proved to us that George Conway has been carried off secretly, for the purpose of hiding him away. Wouldn't you deduce all that from what you have discovered? And isn't that a pretty good beginning? But that is not all you have done. You have pretty conclusively shown that the rascals intend to have our hero confined in a lunatic asylum! Do you see?"

Robert's eyes began to brighten.

"I think, too, that you have shown to us that the villains have taken their captive into Wales! At all events, they must have turned squarely to the westward when they took that last narrow bye-way. Really, my lad, as I sit here and look over the field, as laid out by your report, I fancy I can follow our game over the border. And I shall act upon that fancy. You must keep yourself in harness. I have an experienced detective within call, only waiting your coming. You will go with him, of course?"

"Do you mean, sir, to search for George Conway?"

"Yes."

"Oh! that I will—with all my heart!"

"Then sit you down, while I scribble a line to my officer. It will take me but a moment. You shall be in Wales before another sunset."

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### A SURPRISE AT MENDON CASTLE, AND A SURPRISE AT WALDRON HALL!

THERE was great consternation at Mendon Castle; and to the people of the village it seemed as though grim misfortune had assumed gigantic form and substance, and seized upon the House of Mendon for its own!

On the fourth morning after the funeral services at the Castle, the copy of the London "Times" due that day, and bearing date two days earlier, was received in the servants' hall, and opened by the butler, as he took it along towards the library, where the paper was always left. He had a brother in India, serving in a regiment of dragoons, and it was his wont, when he picked up the "Times," to run his eyes over the column of Indian news. And that he did on this occasion. He was close upon the library door when a name caught his eye that caused him to stop. It was the name—LORD ALLESTON. He had unconsciously set the door ajar, and he so left it while he read:

"A sadness which will be wide-spread and general is ours, as we record the melancholy intelligence which has this moment reached us of the loss at sea of the ship *Roland Castle*, employed in the service of the East India Company. It is feared that all hands were lost. She went down, it is supposed, in one of the terrific typhoons of these latitudes, when ten or twelve days out, on her homeward voyage from Calcutta. A full list of the passengers has not yet been received, but of those who were known to have been on board were the Hon. Mr. Norton, of Ripworth; Arthur, Lord Alleston, of the *Grahams* of the Welsh Marches—"

Thus far had the old butler read when a deep groan burst from his lips; and at that moment the marquis had reached the door to see who was there.

"Well, Tony, what ails you? Ah! the 'Times'? What do you find there?"

"There it is, my lord. Oh, poor, poor boy! And I shall never see his handsome face again!"

Roderic Graham caught the paper and staggered back. He did not look at it until



he had reached his chair. Then he read the item to which Anthony had pointed.

When the Lord of Mendon next came out from that library he seemed to have grown a score of years older. He stooped as he walked, his features were shrunken and the dark circles about the eyes had grown broader and darker.

Oh, could it be? Could it be, that he was the last of his line—the miserable end of a once noble family?

He called for a servant, and gave directions for the summoning of the old attorney.

"Tell him that I must see him at once," was the final word to the messenger.

Meantime Anthony Rowe, the butler of the Castle, had set the sad news afloat, and it spread rapidly.

An hour later Colonel Fitz Eustace came down—he had almost entirely recovered from the effects of his late injuries—and asked if he could see the marquis, but his lordship would not see him. He returned for answer that he could see no one. He did not feel able.

Fitz Eustace bowed very politely to the messenger, and begged that his condolence might be accepted by the noble marquis, and he would defer his visit to another time.

Then the genial colonel, clad in a brand new suit of royal blue, cut after the undress pattern of the Life Guards, his linen white and glossy, his diamond bosom-pin gleaming like the evening star, his whiskers oiled and curled, and his patent leathers freshly polished—thus arrayed, with a gold-banded Wellington cap jauntily set above his loose-locks, he ordered his horse, and followed close by his valet, he set forth for Waldron Hall, reaching the mansion shortly before noon.

As he had expected, the news of the loss of the Boland Castle and the death of Lord Allerton had reached there before him, and the first exclamation of Sir Peter, after the usual salutations had passed, was:

"Well, well, colonel; another sad blow upon your unfortunate house!"

"My dear Sir Peter," cried Fitz Eustace, seizing one of the baronet's hands in both his own, "you cannot know how this crashes upon me. Upon my soul, it overwhelms me. Oh, what is coming next? Have you conversed with Doctor Tobey lately?"

Seeing that the colonel had expressly begged of the baronet that he would draw from the physician, if possible, a true account of Lord Mendon's state of health, this question was not out of place.

A wonderful look came over Sir Peter's face as he reached out and caught the colonel's hand a second time.

"Ah! dear colonel; yes, I have spoken with him, and he was frank and free. Were you aware—did you know—that Roderic Graham was mortally stricken?"

"Alas! yes. Oh, Sir Peter, my true friend, what a state of things is this! Think of the way I came here only a few short weeks ago. Think of then—and—THINK OF NOW! THEN I was a nobody, comparatively unknown, dependent upon the few letters I carried in my pocket for introduction into good society. Now, now—I am—what? Almost Lord of Mendon! The coronet will be mine very soon. I saw my noble cousin this morning, after intelligence of the death of his brother had reached him. He looked old and worn! Truly, he looked like a man near to the grave. Poor Roderic! If I could only serve him! I will not act the hypocrite and say I would give my life to save him because I am not quite so self-sacrificing as that; but I will tell you what I would do, and do it cheerfully: I would surrender my right and title to the broad estates and lordship of Mendon if it could save the life of Roderic. I would do it, sir—and I think you will believe me."

"Yes, my dear colonel, with all my heart."

"Sir Peter, you were asking me the last time I saw you for further information concerning my mother. I feel in just the mood for telling to you a whole family history, if you have patience to listen."

The baronet said he would listen with pleasure and with gratitude, and he put himself into an easy position and bent his ear.

Whereupon James Fitz Eustace went on from the beginning of his infantile career, taking up the thread of his mother's life—Lady Elizabeth Graham that was—and carried them both to a conclusion, his aim being—though his listener may not have seen it in that light—to elevate himself upon a pinnacle of greatness.

The story of Lady Elizabeth was brought in simply for the purpose of cementing his own connection with the house of Graham; and really he made a capital story of it.

He presided over the decanter while he talked, keeping the two glasses charged, and careful to mark the more brilliant periods with a lifting of his goblet, which the other was not slow to imitate. His own head was seasoned and case-hardened, while the head of Sir Peter was proof against five bottles.

We can judge the condition of things when the colonel had reached the objective point of his visit, for the skirmishing and parade and reviewing of between two and three hours had been only preliminary to the grand onset.

The colonel pushed the decanter away and looked grave and solemn.

"Sir Peter Waldron, my dear old friend!—friend of friends! whom I love and honour and esteem!—I have a petition to present which I earnestly pray may receive your careful and candid consideration. You can well conceive that I could not have looked upon your daughter Isabel—the peerless, the matchless maiden who graces your palatial home—without admiration. But, sir, that admiration has become ardent affection and has wholly possessed my heart. She is my first and only love. I never gave my heart to a woman before. Yes, Sir Peter, I love Isabel with all my heart and all my soul, and I now ask your consent to address her with a view to gaining her hand. I want her for my wife. Can I make myself better understood?"

"By the bones of my fathers! No!" cried the baronet.

He always swore that big oath when he felt deeply and mightily. "No!" And he grasped the suitor's hand as he added, with unusual vehemence:

"And I will be equally explicit. Isabel shall be yours, sir! Can I put it more plainly?"

"My dear Sir Peter! I know not how to thank you. Let this, however, be to you a sign of my appreciation."

And he took the old man's hand and pressed his lips upon it with warm and impulsive energy.

"I can understand your emotions, my lord," said the baronet, hastening to bestow upon his daughter's suitor the title that had rendered him worthy. "And now if you would like you shall see the lady herself. I will announce the arrangement. Now will that please you?"

Ordinarily a lover would have preferred to present his own petition to the damsel whose heart and hand he would win, but not so our colonel. He had no hope of winning the maiden's heart.

He wanted her hand because with it would come a fortune. Let the Lordship of Mendon result as it would once wedded to Isabel Waldron he would be wealthy. Her portion of her father's estate he had made sure would be half a million at least.

Ah! that was a fortune that many an English earl might covet. An income of fifteen thousand pounds per year! Mercy! What a life he could live with that!

But he was not utterly insensible to the maiden's personal charms. He was himself a handsome man and he could appreciate beauty in others. He admired Isabel Waldron for her beauty, and he felt that he could be proud of such a wife, independent of the fortune.

On the baronet's part—he was human, and the one darling aim of his life in relation to his youngest daughter he felt was now to be realised. He was morally assured in his own belief that this suitor for Isabel's hand would be Marquis of Mendon. It could not be otherwise.

There could be no mistake about the death of Arthur Graham. He knew that the young nobleman had been anxiously looked for at home, and that he had been sent for; and, moreover, he had heard from young Conway that Arthur was liable to start on his homeward voyage at any time. The "Times" would not have published that item without authority. Ay, the younger brother was dead.

And as to the eldest, Roderic Graham had not long to live. Dr. Tobey had whispered into his ear the judgment of Sir Astley Cooper. It had been imparted to him in confidence and in sober earnestness. Such a disease could not be much longer borne. He had been free to declare that the present marquis would not live to behold the blossoms of the coming spring-time.

Then who came next? The question answered itself in the presence of James Fitz Eustace. He was the nearest and only direct male representative—the son of Lord Arthur Graham's only daughter.

Lord Arthur had been father of Lord John, the last deceased. Yes, this suitor must be Marquis of Mendon, and Sir Peter was determined that his daughter should be marioness.

"The girl shall be sent for, and I will announce the arrangement. How will that suit you?"

And the colonel said it would suit him very well.

In her own chamber sat Bella Waldron, with a letter in her hand. It had been brought to her from the post-office not an hour before by her own maid, whom she had sent for it. She had been looking for it since the morning of the previous day. As we look in upon her she had taken the missive from the desk at her side and was reading it over for the third or fourth time. It was very short, and ran as follows:

"BISHOP'S CASTLE, FEB. —, 1832.

"DEAR SISTER ISABEL,—I promised you that I would let you know as soon as anything was decided. According to your suggestion Mr. Lawrence saw old Mark Dowler at the Castle, and gained from him much valuable information. By some strange means, which he would not divulge, old Mark had been able to gain access to Fitz Eustace's chamber, and had there found a letter which he had copied—a letter from one of the colonel's confederates, bearing the post-mark of the Welsh office of Llanvilling. And we have tracked our men surely in that direction. Before you get this we shall be on the road—a detective officer from Scotland Yard, in London, and an assistant and myself. We are off, and I feel safe in promising you that we will bring George Conway back with us. If you have no faith in the genius of your foster-brother you will in his love, I know."

"ROBERT."

Bella had read this again and refolded it when a servant appeared and announced that her father wished to see her immediately in the main drawing-room below.

She knew that Colonel Fitz Eustace had been with her father, and he might be with him still. What could he want? How could she meet that man?—the man whom she held in utter horror and detestation as the enemy of her dear lover! But she could do it. She had nerve, and she had will.

She looked into her mirror and arranged her toilet with becoming propriety, and then descended to the drawing-room, where she found her father and Colonel Fitz Eustace.

Her father arose upon her entrance, and the visitor did the same.

"Isabel—my child?"

Oh! the poor girl saw on the instant that her father had drunk more wine than he usually drank in the middle of the day, and she knew that his present grandiloquent pose was the result of his extra libations.

"Isabel! Lord James Fitz Eustace!"

Lord James! What in the world did that mean? But she took the visitor's hand, or allowed him to take hers, and returned his bow with stately grace.



["ISABEL! LORD JAMES FITZ EUSTACE!"]

Then her father pointed her to a seat, which she took without hesitation.

"Isabel, will you give me your attention for a moment? Colonel Fitz Eustace—I think he would prefer to be so called."

This with an interrogative glance towards his guest.

"Certainly," returned that individual, with a low bow.

"Colonel Fitz Eustace has done me the honour to ask me for your hand, and I have very plainly informed him that it is his. My dear child, you know what has been my ambition. I have long desired a union between Waldron Hall and Mendon Castle, and here is the opportunity. In a moment, when I had no hope, the bright realisation is offered me. Isabel, you have won the— But that must be for the lover himself to tell. However, I may say to you, my sweet daughter, that I experience both pride and joy in accepting this gentleman for a son, and in thus providing for the future of my child. My dear colonel, I will not trespass. I will leave you to do the rest. Kiss me, my child."

How she did it she never knew. From the time that her father had commenced speaking to the end her heart had stood still—had been hushed in a tight, painful thrill, while her breath had been held in entire suspense—had been held until it seemed as though her bosom would burst, and so it was when he asked her to kiss him.

Then there came a mighty revulsion. The pent-up breath burst forth in a deep, long-drawn moan, almost a cry, and the shocked heart bounded and throbbed tumultuously. And she pressed her lips to her father's cheeks.

And he, poor fool, went away with the belief that the emotion which he had witnessed was but the result of maidenly feeling, highly wrought by the strange situation, and of that deeper sentiment, suddenly excited, which every young female must feel in the presence of the first suitor! That was all, he thought, and the

polite and gallant soldier would soon win his way to her favourable consideration.

There were a few seconds during which the heart of Bella Waldron throbbed so wildly that it seemed to her as though it would burst its prison-walls. But she conquered the terror at length, and regained her self-control, though the ordeal was dreadful, and the last atom of her strength—so it seemed to her—exhausted in the effort.

But, thanks to her faith in the Eternal Principle of Right and Justice, she had conquered, and was able to meet the man calmly and soberly. Her plan was quickly resolved upon, and she had courage to execute it. Her object was to gain time. She had faith in George Conway. She was sure he had it in his power to strip the mask from this man. If she could hold Fitz Eustace at bay until her dear lover had returned he would save her. The thought lifted her heart into the realm of bright hope and gave her strength.

"My dear lady!—Isabel!"

"Sir! Colonel Fitz Eustace!" she broke in, putting out her hand as he advanced towards her, "I beg that you will not offend me."

"Offend! Oh, dear Isabel!"

"Hush! Will you be seated, sir, and let me speak?"

"Angell! yes!"

And he sat down and smiled upon her, and would have spoken further, but she stopped him.

"Colonel," she said, having taken a seat at a little distance, "you must be aware that this event has confounded me. Taking me as it does completely by surprise I find myself entirely at a loss for words to express my feelings, besides being perplexed and bewildered. You surely cannot expect that I can answer you at this time? You would regard me as a woman of no sense should I make the attempt."

"Dear girl!" cried the suitor, impulsively, "I will not ask you to do more at this time than simply bid me to hope. You can do that?"

"An honourable woman, sir, would not bid a

suitor for her hand to hope until she had resolved not to disappoint him. I have not done that. No, no—you must give me time. If you would retain even my friendship you will not urge me now."

"How long a time do you ask?"

Bella's eyes flashed. He asked the question like one in authority; but her answer was calm and quiet.

"Would you ask a neophyte how long it would take him to fully comprehend and believe? Certainly you must allow me to think. I love you not; I scarcely know you. Oh! do not give me pain. If you can find it in your heart to be generous I beg that you will be so. Let me consider."

The colonel shook his head dubiously.

At that moment Kate's clear voice was heard calling for her sister.

"You hear, sir," said Bella, rising, "My sister calls me. We have an engagement. Will you let me take your proposition with me, and—"

"No, no! It is no proposition from me to yourself. I made my proposition to your father, and—"

"I will then give to him my answer, sir," Bella broke in, with impetuous emphasis; "unless," she added, in a lower key, "you shall choose to wait. At present you must excuse me. And—you can see for yourself—now, with all so new and strange—with no thought, no previous hint even of the event—now is not the time, and it would profit neither you nor myself to prolong the present interview. I must bid you adieu till we meet again."

And with this Bella turned and hurried from the room.

Fitz Eustace stood for a little time and gazed into the vacancy left by the departing maiden, and then, with a muttered curse, he sought his hat and overcoat. But he swore to himself as he went that he would bring the proud beauty to terms and win her to his arms.

(To be Continued.)





["WE HAVE BEEN ROAXED, I FEAR," SAID LIONEL.]

## A BURIED TREASURE; OR, SWEET NELLY CAREW.

### CHAPTER III.

#### SIR ANTHONY'S HOARD.

"ELsie, my child, do not tease. Miss Carew is tired with her journey. To-morrow you can take her on a complete tour of inspection. Go to bed now; you have sat up later than usual, and I want to have a little talk with Miss Carew myself."

Mrs. Romaine, Elsie, and Nelly were sitting before the drawing-room fire, the latter already beginning to feel at home at the Manor House.

She had received the kindest of welcomes from Mrs. Romaine, who quite justified Mr. Francis's enthusiastic description of her.

She was a sweet, motherly-looking lady of about forty, and in her youth had been very beautiful, but the sorrow of losing her husband and all her children (except Elsie) had streaked her luxuriant dark hair thickly with silver, and had drawn deep lines round her soft, hazel eyes.

Her heart had opened immediately to the lonely girl, coming for the first time among strangers—and the kindness and warmth of her manner at once set Nelly at her ease.

Elsie, too, a black-eyed, merry sprite of ten years old, had immediately taken a strong fancy to her new governess, and chatted away freely—wanting to take her at once to make acquaintance with "The most darling piping bulfinch in the world, which Jesse, the gardener, had given her that morning, and which was to live in a cage in the schoolroom—if Miss Carew did not mind, of course."

But Mrs. Romaine interposed, and with a kiss to "mother" and her new friend the child ran away, for, though lively, and sometimes a little thoughtless, Elsie was well trained and obedient.

Nelly had told Mrs. Romaine how the train had been delayed, but had made no mention of the disagreeable adventure which even now made her cheeks tingle on recalling it.

When Elsie had left them her mother began to talk to Nelly about her.

"You will find her a docile, affectionate child, and quick at lessons, especially drawing. This is a family talent, for my brother Leo (who returns to-morrow, having been in London) sketches very well, and when younger I had some taste for the art. The only thing Elsie really dislikes is needle-work, and I am especially anxious about this, as I wish her to be able not only to mend but to make her own clothes when old enough."

Mrs. Romaine gazed into the glowing fire with a sad, abstracted expression for a minute, then continued, whilst Nelly listened attentively:

"You may perhaps be surprised when I tell you why I particularly wish Elsie to grow up a useful girl. Miss Carew, I am going to put such confidence in you as is shared by none save members of our own family; but I think as you are to be almost a member of it in fairness you ought to know all. I may trust you, I am sure."

"Indeed you may," said Nelly heartily.

"Look round you. Tell me what you think of all you see. Do not fear to offend," Mrs. Romaine, added re-assuringly.

Nelly, bewildered, obeyed.

At first she saw nothing remarkable. The drawing-room was large and lofty, and a pretty apartment in itself, having a polished oak floor and two bay windows opening on to the lawn outside.

But as her eyes grew more accustomed to its size and space she became aware of a certain

bareness, not to say "skiminess" pervading its arrangement.

Though refinement and taste had done its best to brighten things up by artistic bouquets of autumn leaves, framed photographs, pretty crewel-work, and such trifles, the fact could not be disguised that all the furniture was of the cheapest description, and that there was little enough of it.

The curtains were of cretonne, and a small, well-worn Persian carpet formed an oasis in the midst of the carefully waxed floor.

The room was hung with water-colour sketches—amateur ones—though dashing and powerful. No valuable old pictures graced the walls. Perhaps so much the better, as they decidedly needed re-papering. Nelly, a clever housekeeper for her age, was not slow to note all this, as Mrs. Romaine intended she should.

"Well?" the latter said, smiling, when she saw that the girl had completed her survey. "Speak out, my child; do not be afraid—I wish it."

Nelly obeyed—though with hesitation.

"It is a very pretty room; but—but—perhaps not quite sufficiently furnished. I mean, it is more like our drawing-room at home than what—"

"Than what you would have expected to find here," finished Mrs. Romaine for her. "You are right, and I respect the straightforwardness of your reply. And not only here but throughout the house you will find it the same. Everything is simple, modern, cheap—just sufficient I hope for comfort—but by no means luxurious. Though there is no stint, we live plainly. I see hardly any company, and practise every economy in my personal expenditure."

"And now I must tell you the reason for all this: You may have heard from Mrs. Godfrey that we are not exactly rich people—in fact we are known to be poor for our position. But few have an idea now room. Brackenthorpe Manor, the home which has been in our

family for centuries, is heavily mortgaged, and long since it would have passed from our keeping had not my brother sold most of his adjacent property. The land for miles round once belonged to the Romaynes—now only a few acres are ours. My poor father's extravagance and mania for the turf brought things to a crisis. When he died overwhelming claims flowed in on us from every side.

"All the beautiful old Chippendale furniture and one of the finest collections of pictures in England had to be sold—the old house completely dismantled of its many valuable art treasures—before Leo and myself could even half repay what was owing. My father had kept us in ignorance of the extent of his liabilities, and the knowledge came like a thunder-clap.

"I lost my dear husband some years ago in India and came home with little Elsie to keep house for my father, when my poor mother died. Since then, Leo, my only brother, and myself have lived here together."

"Our names, you will have noticed, are the same, for I married my cousin, Captain Cecil Romayne. My pension, as an officer's widow, helps to keep the house, and a rich maiden lady, Elsie's godmother, having bequeathed the child a small annual sum, I apply it to the purpose of her education.

"My brother has an income of a few hundreds saved from the wreck, and makes what he can by his paintings. Between us we have discharged my father's debts, but with a heavy sigh, 'there is still the mortgage. Part of it is paid off, and by rigid economy we hope, in time, to save the home of our ancestors.

"The hardest part of misanthropism has been the curtailing of charity, formerly dispensed with open hand. We do not let our poor pensioners suffer more than we can help, but it is hard—very hard—to make both ends meet. Yet if we can prevent The Manor from passing into the hands of strangers we shall feel amply repaid for these years of self sacrifice.

"Now, dear Miss Carew, you will know why we live so quietly and economically. We are obliged to keep up the place to a certain extent as we live here, but have only a small staff of women servants and our gardener, Jesse, who attends to the pony also.

"The doctor has ordered riding as an exercise for Elsie, as she is not very strong, or we should dispense with the luxury of a carriage.

"But of all this outsiders guess little. As you may imagine my brother and myself have shrunk from disclosing to strangers the full extent of my poor father's imprudence, and from letting the world at large know of the trouble overshadowing our roof-tree."

Mrs. Romayne concluded her recital, which filled Nelly's heart with warm sympathy, as she answered:

"I am so glad you told me and truly grateful for your confidence. It is indeed noble of you both to have acted in such a manner, and I admire you for it. I shall have all the more pleasure now in trying to serve you to the best of my ability, dear Mrs. Romayne."

She thought with disgust of the false description "that horrid Mr. Francis" had given of his high-minded, chivalrous friend.

"Does Elsie know how matters stand?" asked Nelly, after a pause.

"Hardly, though I think she is sometimes aware that mother and Uncle Leo are straitened for money. I impress on her so often that she must try not to wear out her frocks too soon, and must not be so reckless in breaking the wren babies her uncle brings from London. She asked me to-day for 'a talking doll' on her birthday, but I laughed and told her she must try and find 'Anthony's Hoard.' By-the-bye, that is a favourite amusement of hers. But I forgot—you do not know the legend."

"Pray tell it to me," asked Nelly, for whom such lore had strong attractions.

Mrs. Romayne complied.

"It is said that a certain Anthony Romayne, to whom The Manor belonged in the days of King Charles I., and who was a staunch Royalist, dreading the rapacity of Cromwell's soldiers,

hid somewhere in The Manor or its grounds an immense sum in gold, and a large quantity of family jewels and plate. He and his sons were the only persons who knew its whereabouts, and as they fell fighting for the king at Marston Moor the secret was lost to posterity. At least, so runs the story, in which I confess I have no faith."

"But why should you disbelieve it?" eagerly asked Nelly. "It seems heresy to doubt so picturesque a legend," she added.

"Because, my dear, had there been any such treasure it must have been discovered long ago. Nearly every rood of ground outside and every available nook or corner within The Manor has been thoroughly dug over and explored. More than one owner of the old place has spent a fortune in the search, only to regret having pursued the ignis fatuus. I am inclined to think the whole thing a convenient myth, fabricated by some improvident Romayne to account for the disappearance of certain heirlooms which found their way to the Lombards or the melting-pot for his benefit."

"How delightful if one day it should come to light!" remarked Nelly, for whom the tale had a strange fascination. "The mortgage could then be cleared off, and you and Mr. Romayne would be rich."

"Ah!—If I must not laugh at you, however, for when I was a girl I, too, was a firm believer in 'Anthony's Hoard.' With middle life we lose many youthful delusions. But come; it is growing late and you will be glad to go to bed. Will you take anything first?"

"Oh! no, thanks. I could not, after the substantial meal I had on my arrival. Good night, Mrs. Romayne."

"Good night, my dear. I trust you will sleep well. I hope and think that you will be happy with us."

"I feel sure I shall," replied Nelly, warmly, her heart lighter than she ever thought it could be the first night away from home.

Only one thing distressed her—the idea of meeting her presumptuous fellow-traveller on the morrow. Strange that Mrs. Romayne should not have mentioned him—lucky, too, as Nelly felt she must have betrayed herself had such been the case. Her tell-tale cheeks could never have kept cool.

In spite of these thoughts the white-curtained bed in the snug little room Mrs. Romayne had prepared for her was so cosy that the girl slept almost as soon as her golden head touched the pillow. But the varied events of the day swayed her mind unconsciously even then, for she dreamt that old Anthony Romayne, attired in the Cavalier's costume of his era, beckoned her to follow him through endless subterranean passages, promising to show her where the treasure was concealed.

She obeyed, and at last he stopped, where a very small trap-door appeared in the ground. Pulling this up a recess was disclosed underneath it, which, however, contained nothing but a roll of paper. He took this out and handed it to the girl, who unfolded it. With a cry of fear and anger she cast it down.

It was that fatal sketch, bearing under it the words which had so offended her—"Sweet Nelly Carew." The figure by her side gave a mocking laugh, and though the broad-brimmed, plumed hat shaded the upper part of the face the mouth under its brown moustache she recognised only too well.

In one of the kaleidoscopic freaks common to dreamland grim Anthony had changed into "that horrid Mr. Francis," as with downright girlish hatred Nelly mentally classified him.

A disagreeably vivid dream, which broke off as suddenly as it commenced, leaving Nelly "to knit up the ravelled edge of care" by at last sinking into the sweet oblivion of sound slumber.

After her young companion had retired for the night Mrs. Romayne sat thinking long and earnestly by the drawing-room fire. She was a little disturbed in mind.

"I like her—yes, I like her extremely. There

is something so unaffected and frank—such an utter absence of self-consciousness—which one rarely finds in girls of the present age. Elsie took to her at once, and a child's instinct is rarely at fault. But I wish she was not quite so pretty. Somehow I had no idea—I rather expected a ruddy, countenanced sort of girl, with not much manner. And instead I have this bewitching maiden with a Grauze face and the refined air of a perfect lady."

Rhoda Romayne would have felt inclined to condemn Mrs. Godfrey as lacking judgment; had not her innate sense of justice prevailed.

"After all, how could she tell?" was her immediate after-thought. "If only Leo was not so absurdly impressionable, so ready to become the slave of beauty. I hope he will not try to turn Miss Carew's head. I must warn him. At any rate, I feel sure she is not the sort of girl to give him encouragement. It would be ruin were he to marry—for many years, at least. Poor fellow, he has been 'bitten once'—I pray that this time he may be 'twice shy.'"

These and similar thoughts chased each other in rapid succession through Mrs. Romayne's mind. Then, reproving herself for brooding over misfortunes which might never occur, she followed Nelly's example and went to bed.

She might not have slept so tranquilly had she been aware of the strange nature of the visions which disturbed the rest of the new inmate of Deacons' Manor. Ignorance (in many cases), if not bliss, is often peace of mind.

#### CHAPTER IV.

"WILL YOU NEVER FORGIVE ME?"

It was the custom to rise betimes at The Manor.

"Mother and I always breakfast at eight—then at nine we can go and have a good time in the garden before lessons. We are to have a holiday to-day, though, so that I may show you everything," said Elsie, triumphantly, as she led her governess into the breakfast parlour, used by the family for meals in preference to the gloomy, oak-panelled dining-room.

When breakfast was over Mrs. Romayne told Elsie she might take Miss Carew on the promised tour of inspection. The child, full of glee, seized Nelly's hand.

"Come this way first—we will begin with the school-room," she said.

The two crossed the wide entrance-hall and went down a passage to the back part of the house. Elsie threw open the door with a semi-theatrical "Enter, madam." It was a cheerful apartment, with light paper instead of the panelling which lent rather a gloomy appearance to some of the other rooms. Though plainly furnished it was very comfortable, and a book-shelf, well filled, not merely with lesson books, seemed to promise many a cosy evening's amusement.

"I shall always sit here when I can," Nelly thought. "It will be delightfully out of the way of—"

She started violently, and with difficulty repressed a cry of horrified amazement.

Staring at her, as large as life from above the book-shelf before which she stood, was the very person of whom she was thinking—her *bête noir*, Lionel Francis.

Fortunately her agitation was unnoticed by Elsie, who was busily engaged in placing a lump of sugar between the wires of the bullfinch's cage.

"Miss Carew, see, he is getting quite tame." Then, as Nelly did not reply: "Oh, you are looking at Uncle Leo! Isn't he a dear? I'm so glad he is coming back to-night, for I want you to know him. He is the jolliest uncle anyone could have, I think; though mother says he spoils me awfully. At any rate, he gives me lots of presents. The last ones were two pictures which he painted—one of mother (there, over the fireplace) and the one you are looking at of himself. He said he hated painting his own portrait; it seemed so vain, but I bothered him till he gave in."



The child rattled merrily on, little aware of the stunning, overwhelming effect her words had on the listener.

Mechanically Nelly followed Elsie from room to room, forcing herself to appear interested in the child's prattle, and to praise or criticise coherently what was brought under her notice.

At any other time she would have felt enthusiastic admiration for the grey old Tudor Manor, stately even in its dismantlement and decay, and the majestic trees and wild shrubberies which surrounded it. But now all feeling seemed paralysed—dead, and it was the greatest relief when Mrs. Romaine appeared, suggesting that "she was sure Miss Carew had done enough sight-seeing for one day."

Escaping to her room she sank into an arm-chair and gave herself up to anxious reflection.

The discovery she had made was, indeed, an unlooked-for and most disagreeable complication of affairs.

"Mr. Francis" she could have treated with condign contempt, and could have kept out of his way. This would not be possible with Mr. Romaine—the master of the house in which she was to live for an indefinite period.

Most she, for Mrs. Romaine's sake, force herself to be civil to him and behave as if nothing had happened—hating him bitterly the while? It would be cruelly hard. And yet, while she thus censured him came the memory of his sister's words of praise and his thoughtful kindness to herself on the journey.

But she was too much annoyed to let them soften her.

"He may have good qualities, but he is no true gentleman to play a practical joke on a defenceless girl, and then insult her," she thought. "I will never forgive him."

"Elsie, put on your hat. I want you to come with me to Sweetbriar Lane. I have some oranges and a jelly to take to your favourite, Lane Phoebe."

"Oh, mother, how delightful!—but" as an after thought troubled her mind, "what if Uncle Leo should come while I am away?"

Elsie always liked to be the first to greet her uncle, and to spread the welcome news of his arrival.

"No fear of that, dear. He told me in his letter of yesterday that he should not be here till evening."

"Miss Carew, you will come with us, won't you?"

"Not to-day, I think," interposed Mrs. Romaine, kindly. "The lane is a good way from here, and I know Miss Carew will like to unpack her things and to write home this afternoon. You had better use the little table in the drawing-room, my dear, where you will find all you require. I advise you to get your letter done first, as our post leaves early."

So after luncheon mother and child started on their walk, leaving Nelly to her own devices. She was glad of this, as she had many things to do.

"First, I will write home," she thought. "How glad they will be to hear my lines have fallen in such pleasant places."

Accordingly she established herself comfortably where her kind friend had indicated, and, enjoying the perfect quiet, was soon deep in a long letter to her parents, giving glowing descriptions of all her surroundings.

But she omitted any account of her unpleasant adventure. It could do no good, and would only vex Mr. Carew that he had not brought her himself to Brackenthorpe. He had intended to do so, but had been overruled by Nelly, who knew he could ill spare the money.

"I shall be able to give all my first quarter's salary to Richie," she wrote, with unselfish pleasure. "Good Mr. and Mrs. Godfrey have made me such a handsome present. Only think—five pounds! I hardly like to take it, but I know how it would wound them to refuse."

She had just sealed her letter when a step in the room made her look up.

She rose hastily, crimsoning to the roots of her hair.

Before her stood—MR. ROMAYNE.

"Miss Carew, I did not expect—" he began, hurriedly, in agitated tones.

Nelly interrupted him.

"Mrs. Romaine is out. Pray allow me to pass."

Her voice was hard and cold as she endeavoured to glide by him.

"Pardon me; not till you have heard what I have to say."

His manner was firm, though deferential, and in spite of herself Nelly felt compelled to obey. Mr. Romaine closed the door, and placing a chair for her, took one himself.

"I do not wish to sit down, thank you."

"I would rather you did, Miss Carew."

There was a slightly authoritative tone in his voice.

What was there in this man, hating him as she did, which forced her to comply with his wishes?

Nelly obeyed, but could not resist the opportunity to thrust a poisoned dart between the joints of her adversary's armour.

"Since you desire it, Mr. Romaine, I suppose I must yield. My position in your house leaves me no choice."

"Ah!" he drew a long breath. "How like a woman's that speech was! You are ungenerous, Miss Carew; but never mind, strike hard, I deserve it."

Nelly could not help feeling a moment's compunction, he looked so utterly ashamed and miserable, and she knew what she had said was unjust.

"Will you not allow me to go now?" she asked, more gently.

"No," Mr. Romaine replied, firmly, "not until you have again received the assurance of my deep regret for what occurred yesterday. The expression of my humblest penitence for the most unjustifiable piece of folly by which I offended you." He rose and paced the room agitatedly. "What demon of mischief possessed me to go so far I know not, but," with the ghost of a smile, "the character Mr. Francis gave you of his friend is a correct one. I am too easily swayed by impulse—too prone to be led on by the excitement of a pleasant adventure—to be always coolly calculating results. Anyhow, I have just received a severe lesson. Rhoda has often told me I should one day bitterly regret what she calls my 'boyish thoughtlessness,' and she will find her prophecy at last realised."

"If she hears of the circumstance, perhaps. She will never do so from me," replied Nelly, with quiet dignity.

"You have not told her? Miss Carew, I retract my accusation of ungenerousness. On the contrary, you are magnanimous. May I not dare then to hope that, as you pity me, in time you may even forgive me?"

A ray of hope lit up Lionel Romaine's blue eyes, only to be remorselessly crushed.

"Do not misunderstand me, Mr. Romaine. It was not magnanimity, but shame which caused me to conceal the matter," said Nelly.

"You do not mean to forgive me, then? Well, I can say no more, for I deserve my punishment. I will not trouble you in this way again, but will bear my chastisement in silence, Miss Carew."

He held the door open, thus signifying that the interview was at an end.

Nelly bowed, and left the room.

A true woman at heart, her implacable resolution "never to forgive" was fast melting at the sight of Mr. Romaine's real unhappiness. But such a strange anomaly is human nature that she would have died rather than he should know it.

Mrs. Romaine and her brother were alone in the drawing-room, Nelly having begged that she might remain with Elsie in the school-room.

She knew that the brother and sister must have many things to talk of, and she did not care to face Mr. Romaine again that evening.

"So you came home early, Leo?" remarked his sister, looking up from her knitting.

"Yes. To tell you the truth I was feeling rather bored at Staveley. Our friends, the Greens, are just now wild about archeology, and have a couple of learned professors staying in the house, who are mad upon brasses. They wanted to drag me a nine-mile walk to some out-of-the-way church this afternoon, but I excused myself on the plea of 'urgent home business,' and—I am here."

Mrs. Romaine laughed heartily.

"You lazy boy! that was just like you. But, Leo, you should not tell fibs."

Though she was forty and her brother twenty-six she still retained an elder sister's right to give him an occasional mild scolding.

She little knew that in this instance he told the truth, for an urgent desire to make his peace with Nelly had caused him to return home as soon as possible. As peace was not made he did not intend to tell Rhoda about the untoward occurrence of yesterday; not that he feared doing so, but it would make matters even more disagreeable for both, and he had a man's hatred of "a row." His sister could lecture him pretty smartly at times—when he deserved it.

"You saw Miss Carew, so she tells me," Mrs. Romaine presently said, quietly.

"Yes."

"She is very pretty, Leo. Now mind, I will not have you trying to flirt with her."

"My dear Rhoda, don't distress yourself. It is not likely I shall do such a thing; besides, I think I have had enough of that amusement."

Mr. Romaine made a significant grimace.

Some months before he had been ignominiously jilted by a pretty girl to whom he had paid attention, and who, after pretending to care for him, had thrown him over for a richer suitor.

"I did not mean to touch the sore spot, my poor Leo," said his sister, gently, moved by the bitterness latent in his words.

But it did not spring from the cause she imagined; though she knew it not they were at cross purposes.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE TREASURE DISCOVERED.

THE red and gold robes of autumn had given place to the ermine mantle of winter, and Nelly had now been two months at Brackenthorpe Manor.

She was on the whole very happy in her new home. Mrs. Romaine continued kind as ever, and Elsie was a charmingly affectionate, docile pupil.

Of Mr. Romaine she saw little. He was generally at work in his studio, or reading in the library. When they met, which seldom happened save at meal-times, he was gravely courteous, but he never sought occasion to address her, or again recurred to the hated subject of the portrait.

His sister could not help noticing his unusual taciturnity in Nelly's presence, and one day commented upon it.

"You do not seem to like Miss Carew, Leo," she said, complainingly.

"My dear Rhoda, you women are enigmas. First you tell me not to flirt with your protégée, now I verily believe you are disappointed because I don't do it," Mr. Romaine replied, laughing.

With this jesting answer she was obliged to be satisfied. She little guessed how madly, despairingly he echoed her words to himself.

"Not like her!"

If ten years of his existence could have brought but one smile from those beautiful lips, but one kind glance from those grave, sweet eyes he would have sacrificed them freely.

In spite of the icy restraint it cost him so much to maintain towards her, and the cruel treatment he had received at her hands, there was no disguising the fact. Lionel Francis Romaine had fallen deeply, hopelessly in love with "Sweet Nelly Carew."

Like all other men of artistic taste he had worshipped at the shrine of beauty, had experienced many fleeting impressions du cœur, such as his former love affair.

A handsome and agreeable man he had been somewhat petted by the opposite sex; it was new to him to be treated with hauteur by one of them, and his passion was increased by it.

His love for Nelly was a very different thing to the lukewarm "spooniness" of an idle flirtation, and as its strength increased so did his misery, because he knew it to be hopeless in every way.

"She hates me, and even if she did not I can't afford to marry till this wretched mortgage is paid off, and that will take years," he said to himself, despairingly. "I must suffer in silence."

Meanwhile what of Nelly? Did she really hate Mr. Romayne? On the contrary, her feelings had undergone a considerable modification now her anger had worn off. Her temper was warm—what woman is worth a pin who has not one?—but it was generous and forgiving.

The persistent cold reserve with which he behaved piqued her. Had he shown the least disposition to once more entreat her friendship she would willingly have accorded it. She had been too severe; a more intimate observation of Lionel Romayne's character had shown her its truly excellent and even lovable side.

He was the best of brothers, and little Elsie also was devoted to him, for he was never tired of lending a sympathetic ear to all her childish interests, and would at any time give up his own work or pleasure to ride with her, or help her with the small plot she called her garden.

But Nelly was too proud to make the first advance, and he, after what had passed, shrank from doing so. Matters might have gone on for an indefinite period in this unsatisfactory manner but for an extraordinary event, which came about in a way forcibly bringing to the minds of all concerned the old adage, "Truth is stranger than fiction."

Yuletide crept on, bringing with it a keen disappointment for poor Nelly.

A mild attack of scarlatina had broken out among the young ones at the Rectory, and it was adjudged by all concerned unwise that Nelly should go home for the Christmas holidays, as neither she nor Elsie had had the complaint.

Mrs. Romayne promised her a longer time at Easter to make up, and with this she tried to be content, though her heart ached.

One day she came into the library where Mrs. Romayne was sitting, her brother and Elsie being out together.

"I have been thinking," she said, "that as I shall not be at home to help decorate the church this year I should like to illuminate a text for it and send it to papa. There is an old missal among the books here from which I could copy some letters. I will take the greatest care of it if you will lend it me."

Mrs. Romayne assented readily.

"Certainly, my dear. Take it, by all means. I am sure it will be safe with you. It is one of the few things I saved from the wreck after my poor father died, because its illuminated capitals and quaint black letters used to interest me so greatly when a child, and also the inscription on the fly-leaf, 'A. E., 1629,' which seems to imply that the book formerly belonged to Anthony Romayne, of legendary notoriety."

On hearing this Nelly turned over the yellow leaves of the old book with eager interest. She and Elsie had often discussed the strange story of the hidden treasure, in which (in spite of Mrs. Romayne's scepticism) the child loved to believe. It was a pet game of hers to dig in out-of-the-way corners of the garden, and to pretend that some transparent sandstone or gay pebble she might unearth was one of the jewels of "Anthony's Hoard."

Could it be possible that any clue to the mystery lurked within the pages of this ancient tome?

She hazarded the suggestion, but a "Nonsense! you romantic child—why, you are as

bad as Elsie!" and a hearty laugh was all the answer she received.

Taking her prize to the school-room Nelly set to work at once with such good will that she had soon nearly completed the outline of her illumination.

It was a pleasant task to copy the beautifully-drawn initials which had cost their monastic limners so much thought and labour, and Nelly, who was no mean artist (having been carefully taught by her accomplished father) enjoyed the work thoroughly.

But at last she found her progress arrested by a difficulty. The delicate tracery which adorned the particular letter which she was drawing was almost obliterated by a species of mildew which often attacks antique painting on parchment.

"What a pity!" she thought. "This initial is so beautiful that I should like to have copied it exactly. I have heard papa say that warmth will sometimes restore faded illumination on vellum. At any rate, I might try."

Kneeling before the fire she held the open book towards the glowing embers, taking, however, great care not to scorch it.

In a minute she looked to see how the plan answered.

What had she done? A loud cry of regret and terror escaped her lips. The book fell from her hands as she exclaimed:

"What shall I do? What will Mrs. Romayne say?"

The warmth had taken no effect upon the faded black letter, but, disfiguring the fair white surface of the vellum which formed a wide margin to the text, appeared tawny-red stains in all directions, filling poor Nelly with dreadful dismay.

"I have scorched it, and yet I was so careful," she said to herself, ready to weep, for she knew how Mrs. Romayne prized the very few heirlooms which still remained at The Manor.

"The only thing I can do is to show it to her and say how sorry I am. She is too kind to reproach me, which makes it all the worse."

Taking the missal, she hurried to the library, where she found Mrs. Romayne still sitting, but not alone, for Elsie and her brother had come in and were there also.

"I am so grieved. I—I have accidentally scorched a page of the book," Nelly began, her voice trembling as she opened the missal to show the extent of the damage wrought, and placed it in Mrs. Romayne's hand.

The latter gazed at the book and then at the speaker with surprise.

"Scorched it! Where? Not on this page, at all events," she said; and then turned over the other leaves (for no sign of any such thing was visible). "Why, Nelly, you must be subject to ocular delusions. The book is all right, my dear child."

Mrs. Romayne handed it back to Nelly.

She turned to the page which was supposed to have been burnt, and almost doubted the evidence of her own senses, for the vellum was creamy and fair as ever, not a trace of the red marks remained.

Had she mistaken the place? No. Every page was alike unstained, intact.

"I must have fancied it—yet no; I am positive the marks were there," said Nelly.

Then she related exactly how the circumstance which so alarmed her had occurred.

"Give me the book," said Mr. Romayne, who till now had remained a silent spectator of the scene.

Elsie handed it to him, and he held the missal open at the page Nelly had designated to the warmth of the fire, the child watching intently, for she knew "Uncle Leo" had a reason for most things he did.

"Look, look!" in a few minutes she cried, excitedly. "Miss Carew was right. See! the red marks are coming. Why, how odd! They look like letters."

The child was correct in her assertion. Her uncle had held the book longer to the fire than Nelly had done, and the stains stood out in bold distinctness, their true character revealed, as old-fashioned though perfectly legible writing.

Lionel Romayne's heart beat rapidly and his face flushed.

Though, like his sister, he had always been sceptical as to the legend of "Anthony's Hoard," the fact that the tale existed was sufficient to lend no common interest to such a discovery as he had just made.

With breathless excitement the three deciphered the inscription. When they had done so even Mrs. Romayne's scepticism was shaken, and she cried, with intense eagerness:

"Oh! Leo. Is it should be true, after all!"

The words on the margin were: "DRAZE V FACES N.E. OF YE CLOUKE TOWER." Written more than two centuries ago in a secret ink invented by those who engaged in the many State conspiracies of the time, yet the inscription had, marvellous to relate, retained its pristine freshness and was as distinct as when first traced by the mailed hand of the old cavalier.

Elsie was wild with delight; but her uncle calmed her transports.

"Hush, child!" he said. "We must go quietly to work, and, above all, we must not be too sanguine. Who knows whether the writing may not be a grim practical joke of some dead-and-gone Romayne? That weakness has always been a failing of our race." He could not resist a stolen glance at Nelly, and a certain gleam in her eyes made him feel happier than he had done for weeks. "She does not hate me quite so much now," he said to himself with a thrill of joy.

"But you will dig, uncle?" continued the pertinacious Elsie.

"Yes, yes, child—to-night Jesse and I will try if there is any truth in the mysterious parchment. Meanwhile, remember that a 'still tongue marks a wise head.'"

Muffled in wraps, and carrying lanterns, a party of five made their way that night to the Clock Tower. It was a curious ruin which stood in the grounds of The Manor, and which tradition said had once had a dial built into its surface.

A tower it was only in name, being nothing more now than a heap of grey broken stones.

The party consisted of Mrs. Romayne, Nelly, Elsie, Mr. Romayne, and Jesse, the gardener, an old and faithful servant.

There had been a thaw, and the melting of the snow and consequent softening of the ground made digging operations easy.

Jesse and his master set to work at once, the latter taking by compass and measure the requisite bearings, as nearly as he could.

"We have been hoaxed, I fear," said Lionel, as after two unsuccessful excavations they rested, leaning on their spades for some minutes.

"Oh, do try again," cried Elsie. "The third time is always lucky."

Mrs. Romayne and Nellie echoed the plea.

"Very well, here goes then!" cried Lionel, good-naturedly.

The two set to work again, though with small hope of result.

Suddenly, however, a cry from Mr. Romayne made everyone's heart stand still.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed, "I can get no further. There is something hard below. Dig away, Jesse. By Jove! Did you hear that?" as his spade rang on metal.

The suspense was now too great for words. Too excited to speak, with faces pale as death, the men worked while the others looked on.

They had soon cleared a space of about four feet square, and, shovelling the loose earth away, exposed to view a trap-door of rotten wood and rusty iron.

"The crow-bars, quick, man! Now, strike with a will. That's right. We shall do it," cried Mr. Romayne.

And as he spoke, with a powerful blow he prised the trap-door open, dragging it—with Jesse's assistance—from its hinges.

A rush of foul air almost stupefied the party for a moment and extinguished the lanterns.

But this quickly passed off, and the lights being re-kindled all crowded to look into a



kind of small vault, or cellar, lined with brick-work, to which the trap door afforded ingress.

Whether it had been built by stout old Anthony and his sons for the purpose, or whether it had originally served as a secret hiding-place for Royalists in trouble, as it was afterwards found to have subterranean communication with The Manor, was never found out; but, at any rate it had been utilised to a good purpose.

Mr. Romayne and Jesse cautiously let themselves down into the hollow, and in a moment loud shouts of exultation were heard.

"Oh, do let us come down!" cried the three outside, who could hardly contain themselves for curiosity.

"Come along, then, but be careful."

With Mr. Romayne's help, his sister, Nelly, and Elsie, were soon also inside the vault.

The sight which met their eyes positively beggared description. Scattered over the floor in wild profusion, among fragments of the canvas bags—gnawed to pieces by rats—which had contained them, lay gold and silver pieces by the thousand, all of the coinage of Charles I., but none the less valuable. Amidst these, in glittering heaps, were jewels of enormous value; diamonds emitting brilliant rays of red and green fire, lustrous sapphires, and soft, moonlike oriental pearls, blending in one rich confusion, just as they had been hurriedly thrown into their hiding-place centuries ago. Golden beakers set thickly with flashing gems, massively embossed salvers, heavy silver plate, formed but a tithe of the hidden wealth thus concealed.

Elsie danced about like a mad child, her black eyes sparkling with wildest ecstacy.

Mrs. Romayne sank down on an old chest and sobbed for joy, whilst she wrung her brother's hand, saying:

"Oh, Leo! Leo! To think of it. The Manor saved and all the land of the Romaynes bought back! No more toil, no more grinding economy. Our poor need not be stinted," she continued, ever unselfish, and thinking of others.

"Ay, sister, the king shall have his ain again. Romayne of Brackenthorpe, ere many suns have set, will be 'Lord of the Manor' once more, thanks to glorious old Anthony."

Mr. Romayne spoke calmly—for men do not betray their emotions like women—but his voice was agitated and tremulous.

Nelly stood silently by. Her heart was too full for words.

"Miss Carew, how can I express my gratitude? You have restored to me riches, honour—the home of my ancestors—how can I ever repay you? And yet, much as I already owe, would that I dare crave one more boon."

Nelly and Lionel were alone, Mrs. Romayne having gone up to see Elsie into bed.

"You have no reason to thank me for what was the result of mere accident. But what is this other favour you would ask?"

Her pulse beat rapidly, for she anticipated his answer. He lowered his voice almost to a whisper:

"The forgiveness you have withheld for so long."

"I cannot give it."

She averted her sweet face and would not meet his ardent gaze.

"What! Not after all these weary weeks of suffering? Oh, Nelly, cruel one, why?"

He clasped her hand—it was not drawn away.

"Because—because—you have had it for ever so long."

She tried to break away from him, but it was useless. The next moment she was clasped to his heart, her face hidden on his breast.

"Nelly, look up! Do you think you could ever care for me?"

"I do not know, but," mischievously, "perhaps I might try."

At this moment Mrs. Romayne entered the room.

"Well, upon my word!" she was beginning, but Lionel interposed.

"Rhoda, Miss Carew has promised to be my wife."

"I should hope so, considering what I have just seen," said Mrs. Romayne, dryly.

But for all that she came and kissed the two very affectionately.

"You arch deceivers! and to think that I once imagined you disliked each other!"

Nelly and Lionel kept their own counsel, and none save themselves ever heard about a certain adventure.

But when, to tease her, he called her by the quaint pet name of her childhood, she would revenge herself by saying:

"Do you remember 'THAT HORRID MR. FRANCIS'?"

Good fortune, they say, never comes singly. Within a few days of her engagement to Lionel Romayne, Nelly received the glad news that her father's old uncle having died without making a fresh will, the hard-working clergyman had become the heir to all his wealth.

With a portion of it Mr. Carew bought a good living, and as his health was far from strong he kept a curate to assist him in its duties—to which office Richard, who grew up to fully justify his family's pride in him, finally succeeded.

One day a merry peal of bells was heard from the grey tower of Ulverstone Church, Mr. Carew's new benefice, a pleasant town not far from Starbridge.

Directly afterwards a bridal party emerged from the holy edifice—a fair girl, with golden hair, leaning on the arm of a handsome, soldierly-looking man, walking first, and a long procession of friends following.

Squire Godfrey and his wife were amongst the number, and as the young people got into their carriage the former said, with heart-felt emphasis:

"God bless her, for she deserves it—my Sweet Nelly Carew—or, rather, Sweet Nelly Romayne, now."

"Amen," echoed those who heard it, amongst others the parents and brother who loved her so dearly, and for whom, in their time of need, she had sacrificed so much.

But more earnestly than all were the words re-echoed from the heart of the husband, to whom, when in years to come they descended the hill of life together, with silver hair and tottering limbs, she was still SWEET NELLY.

## THE WAY OF IT.

A SHORT STORY.

(COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

"MOTHER says I must go, and my wife says I shan't. Now what on earth is a poor devil to do?"

"Don't swear, Ned."

"Swear! You don't call that swearing, do you?"

"Well, it sounds bad, anyway."

A long pause, in which Ned Foster drummed an imaginary tune with the tips of his fingers on the table before him, and gazed with no speculation in his eyes at his pretty sister, Mrs. Halstead, who was seated opposite.

"What am I to do?" he asked again, pulling his tawny moustache moodily.

"Do? Why, do as you like."

"Hum! I don't know what I like. You see, Hat," squaring his elbows on the table and frowning savagely at the gigantic sumac his sister was embroidering on velvet as though this particular bit of high art were the cause of all his annoyance—"mother has got the tin and Ella has the temper and I'll be hanged if I know which I'm most afraid of—losing the one or getting the other."

"Why not take Ella with you?"

"She won't go."

"Well, leave her with mother."

"She won't stay."

Hattie began to laugh.

"She must do one or the other, Ned."

"No, she won't."

Hattie paused, with her needle high in empty air, and looked at her brother in astonishment.

"Do you mean to tell me that you have explained this matter to Ella—told her that you wish to please mother and set yourself right with your employers by going to America for the firm, and that she positively refuses to go with you, or consent to your going without her?"

"That's just it, Hat. You see she won't go because the sea makes her so sick, and she swears if I go she will get a divorce—"

"A divorce! She can't get one."

"She can behave so that I shall have to."

Mrs. Halstead dropped her work, and returned her brother's steady stare with a frightened one.

"Ella is a good woman," she faltered.

"Who says she isn't?" answered her brother, fiercely. "She is awfully high spirited," he added, presently, "and when she is very angry she is as reckless as—as fury," remembering himself just in time and closing the sentence rather weakly. Mother and Ella don't hitch at all. Ella is hasty and mother is provoking, and between the two I am in hot water most of the time. They lead me the deuce of a jig sometimes. Just look at it now: mother declares if I decline to go abroad, throw away my chances as she expresses it, she will wash her hands of me for the future; and Ella declares if I do go she will wash her hands of me. You know how fond I am of Ella, I hate to disappoint her in anything, but mother is worth forty thousand if she is a copper, and you and I are her only children. I never was brought up to work and I confess I don't care to throw my share overboard just for a whim."

"It seems to be a test case, Ned. Let me think a minute."

Mrs. Halstead remained silent for some moments, lost in thought, while her brother poked the fire violently, thereby causing a shower of white ashes to rise and settle down upon the dark velvet of the mantel lambrequin, an offence which upon ordinary occasion would have brought down vials of wrath upon his head.

"Perhaps Ella would consent to come to me," she said, at length.

Ned clutched at the straw of hope.

"Very likely she might, Hat. Go and see, like a dear, good girl. She likes you and admires Ramsey immensely. By the way I wish he would come in. I should like to hear what he advises."

As if in answer to the wish the door opened and Ramsey Halstead entered. A large, fair, handsome man, with a frank, open face. It was easy to see by the flush that swept over Hattie's face that this was her hero, and the soft light of Ramsey's steady grey eyes deepened as he came forward and took his wife's delicate face between his two large, firm hands and kissed her tenderly.

"I thought I heard my name as I came in," he said, grasping Ned cordially by the hand.

"Yes, I was saying that Ella admired you. Hattie was thinking of asking her to pay you a little visit while I run over to America on business. She will tell you about it."

"Sit here, Ramsey," said Hattie, pushing him into an easy-chair and seating herself on a low stool at his feet. "You see," she explained, clasping her hands together and resting them on her husband's knee, "Ned has to go abroad. Ella don't want to stray with mother, and she can't go with Ned because she suffers so from sea-sickness, and I thought we might ask her to come to us until Ned returns, if you are willing."

"Of course; why not? Certainly!" responded Mr. Halstead, but without much cordiality.

"I'm in a box unless Ella consents to do

something," added Ned, rather vaguely. "You and Hattie talk it over. I'll drop in tomorrow."

After he had gone Mrs. Halstead resumed the topic. She related the affair as clearly as possible, ending with her usual question:

"What do you think, dear?"

"What do I think? I think Ned is to be pitied for not having a reasonable wife. I should be tempted to go ahead and take my chances."

"Why, Ramsey?"

"My darling, perhaps I am wrong, but I don't Ella very well. She is too selfish and vain, and I don't think she is worthy of all the love Ned lavishes upon her. But if you want to ask her here do so, little one. It will be a sort of nuisance, but I'll be polite for Ned's sake."

"She is very handsome, Ramsey."

"Is she? I never observed it. Handsome is that handsome does. She would have no charms for me. I promise not to quarrel with her; that is the best I can do. There, there, don't look disappointed, my pet! I will be a model host, if only to please you, but don't ask me to admire her, she isn't the style of woman I respect."

Then Mr. Halstead changed the subject. In fact, after an hour he forgot all about the matter till, coming home from business one evening, he found Ella installed as a member of his household.

The morning after her arrival Mr. Halstead entered the dining-room rather hastily, not altogether in the best of humours, being a little late, and moreover having struggled with a refractory collar till, warm and irritated thereby, a little more acid was added to the already soured state of mind incident to a curtailed amount of dressing time.

Hattie, detained by the complaints of a sick housemaid, was slow in attendance, and the prospect of a hurried breakfast without Hattie's cheerful presence was not agreeable.

He found, sitting quietly by the window, a graceful, drooping figure clothed in some sort of soft, clinging white material—in short, the new inmate. Too courteous to visit upon an unoffending guest the petty discordance within him, he paused and greeted her with extra politeness. Rising, she stretched out a soft white hand with a gesture half timid, half entreating, and said:

"You are very good to give me a place of refuge in your home. I have not yet thanked you. I do not know that I can, but indeed, indeed I appreciate your kindness."

Ramsey looked at her a little perplexed. He had said truly when he told Hattie that he did not like Ned's wife. He had seen but little of her, and always in her imperious moods, and had been anything but prepossessed in her favour, but this was a different guise, she was unassuming and his guest—two strong calls upon his forbearance and generosity.

As he stood for a moment holding her delicate hand in his strong one, unconsciously watching her beautiful eyes grow soft and dewy under the recollection of her uncomfortable domestic situation, a feeling of pity arose in his heart and he began dimly to discover that she was a very handsome woman and more attractive than he had thought. Possibly she had been more harshly dealt with than the occasion required.

"Suppose you leave the question of my goodness for the present and give me some coffee," he said, smiling. "Hattie is detained, and I am in a hurry."

With a desire to be friendly and kind he did not open his paper, as was his custom, but sat watching her as she waited upon him.

There is a charming way even of pouring a cup of coffee, and Ella Foster did nothing without a grace peculiar to herself. The supple white hands touched the pretty china deftly, and without unpleasant clatter. The quaint old silver cream pitcher and sugar tongs seemed brighter as she held them.

A nameless repose and elegance hung around her like a faint, sweet perfume, and as the fair-haired giant at the foot of the table continued

to look at her he began also to wonder why he had ever thought her other than pleasing.

Grace and repose hovered around the head of the table, and before long had pervaded the atmosphere of the whole apartment. Before it Ramsey's irritation vanished like the frost before the sun, and when Hattie entered she found him smiling and happy, and less in a hurry than she supposed.

"Dear me, Ramsey," she said, bustling about, "I thought I should never get here. I am so glad Ella gave you your coffee. Are you all right?"

A swift look flashed out of Ella's eyes, and just a shade of anxiety was visible as she awaited his reply.

"As right as right, Hattie, my dear. I have had a fine breakfast, thanks to Mrs. Foster." And he kissed his wife and gave Ella a kind word as he hurried away.

All that day a pleasant ghost walked with Ramsey Halstead. It was like the memory of a beautiful, shadowy picture seen long ago—a faint, sweet odour far off—a half-forgotten strain of music playing softly in the head, yet refusing to be captured and given voice.

Once or twice he stopped in the very act of humming an old love tune, and asked himself the practical question, "What makes me feel so jolly?" But the answer was not at hand. Like a dream we seek to relate, like a shadow we strive to grasp, the effort to secure it is the signal for its departure.

Had he been told that a danger lurked for him in the gleam of his beautiful kinswoman's eyes he would have laughed the idea to scorn.

"I am an honest, honourable man, loving my wife truly and entirely, and only feeling pity for my relative in distress, and pleasure in contributing to her comfort."

This is what he would have thought had he gone so far as to think—which he did not.

Temptations may be resisted when we become satisfied that there are temptations assailing us. The most dangerous foes are those that come to us in the guise of friends, and he who thinks himself most secure is he who stumbles first.

So as the weeks and months ran on Mr. Halstead, believing himself simply fulfilling his wife's wishes, namely, to be polite and kind to her brother's wife, gave himself up more and more to the fascination of a dangerous and unscrupulous woman. The home circle was quiet and pleasant, and Hattie made no reproach, though her face grew paler, her step slower, and the thin hands were hot and restless. We do not notice readily the changes in the faces we see daily, and if our minds are filled with other thoughts our eyes are blind to this unspoken language of suffering.

Ella saw and understood thoroughly the subtle change in Hattie—noticed the heavy shadows around the tired eyes, and laughed quietly to herself as she muttered, contemptuously, "Jealous!" and enjoyed the trouble she was causing.

Every morning found her early in the breakfast-room, clad in quiet daintiness which she knew so well how to display with so much effect. The soft hair never lacked its rebellious little curl to stray over the low, white forehead, pushed away a thousand times by the white, jewelled fingers, but always returning. The tiny slipper never failed to show its little toe and a hint of the pretty silken hose. The smallest bow did the duty of its intention, and every fold and pleat breathed an elegance and fragrance that belonged to her alone.

No woman living could gauge the nature of the man whom she desired to enslave better than this one. The secret of her charm lay in the consummate skill with which she played upon the vanity, generosity, or sympathy of her victim. To Ramsey Halstead she appealed in girlish simplicity tinged with sadness. She was deserted, ignored, miserable. Ned's letters, which were frequent, were never mentioned, and all reference to him or her past home was met with a deep sigh and a pitiful droop of the mouth.

If her shining chestnut hair came often beside Hattie's sober brown, till one looked dull and

dingy beside the other's satin sheen, who would guess there was a meaning in forcing the comparison? If the clear voice wavered and broke down over the cheerful songs of love and home, which rang out clear enough when Ramsey was not near by to note the effect of the pathos, who was there to call his attention?

Every evening found her in the parlour, cheerful, but with an underlying vein of sadness hidden with elaborate show. At her suggestion Ramsey had resumed a long relinquished practice upon the violin, and hour after hour her white fingers played strain after strain while he stood beside her and her dreamy violet eyes were turned up into his face and his were cast down upon her, and her soft, dangerous beauty, till his brain was bewildered, his senses intoxicated. A chance touch of her steady hand thrilled him with a nameless joy and dread, but, like one half awakened, he heeded not the pitfall at his feet.

Hattie declined to go often out. Perhaps this was her greatest mistake. Had she been less sensitive and allowed a greater number of people to have joined in the circle of friends the evil might have cured itself. Ella might have sought other victims, or Ramsey might have seen his own position more clearly. But this she could not bring herself to do. Like many another woman, she said:

"What I can conceal from the world I can endure. I could not bear to be the subject of idle talk, nor shall they."

But all things earthly end, both good and evil, and so did all of this.

Ned wrote that he was to sail that very day, and should be home in a fortnight at most. The news was received with different emotions by the different ones whom it most concerned. Hattie heard it with mingled dread, fear and joy; Ramsey with a dull feeling of loss which he could scarcely understand, but called it dislike of change; while to Ella the news was a more unpleasant shock.

Thoroughly enjoying her cruel folly, she experienced a keen disappointment and chagrin at the prospect of being obliged to leave without having actually brought Ramsey to her feet. That he was infatuated she believed. Was his passion strong enough to test against honour? She resolved to try.

Circumstances favoured her. A few days after the arrival of the letter Hattie drove into town to visit a sick friend, and as luck—good or evil—would have it, Ramsey came home earlier than usual.

Ella saw him as he came up the walk, and instantly decided upon her plans.

When Ramsey entered the parlour he found her crouched upon the sofa, her face buried in her hands, sobbing as though her heart would break.

"Why, Ella! What is the matter? What has happened?" he cried, in alarm.

Silence.

"Ella, you frighten me! Have you bad news? What is it?"

Slowly the flushed face was raised, and the eyes, drenched in tears, looked entreatingly into his.

"Oh, Ramsey, I am so unhappy!" she sobbed. "You have been so good to me here, and now I must go. I cannot bear it! I cannot bear it!"

"But why need you go, dear?"

"Can I stay with Ned and Hattie here?"

Ramsey started as if stung; a sudden gleam of light flashed athwart the darkness of his vision and showed him where he stood. He staggered back and clutched at a chair for support, staring at her dumbly.

"Ramsey! Ramsey!" she burst forth, passionately. "Do not send me away, do not send me away! Who have I in all the world to love me but you? What have I done?" she continued, springing to her feet and pushing her heavy hair from her tear-stained face. "What have I done that I should be left here till called for, like a worthless bag or package? Why should I suffer like this? Was it my fault that I came here only to learn the difference between



a noble, manly man and the poor, weak creature I am bound to—

"Ella! For God's sake, stop! You do not know what you are saying. I think I must have been mad!" he muttered through his clenched teeth, pacing the room rapidly.

Ella was a clever actress, but she felt that her victim was slipping from her grasp.

"Ramsey," she pleaded, sinking on her knees before him and lifting her clasped hands up, "what have I done?"

"Heaven alone knows what you have done!

I know that I have done what will make me contemptible in my own eyes for ever; I have betrayed the confidence of the man who trusted me, and half broken the heart of the truest woman in the world—that is what I have done. Get up, if you are not utterly beside yourself, and listen to me. When you came here," he continued, leaning one hand on the back of a chair, and gazing resolutely into her flushed face, "I did not like you; I had seen you and judged you—harshly, it may be—still I had my opinion. Hattie, in the kindness of her heart desiring only your comfort and Ned's happiness, begged to be allowed to offer you a welcome here. I consented only because she wished it. So far I am blameless. You came. I found you beautiful, charming, fascinating. You have made me your admiring slave; you have intoxicated me with the sweetness of your beauty; you have made me forget everything except the grace and perfume of your presence. But that I have wilfully, knowingly acted the villain's part, I swear is false. Until this hour I did not dream of the damnable things of which I have been guilty. I have behaved like a fool. Let us end this folly. You are beautiful and bewitching, but I do not love you any more than you love me."

"I do love you, Ramsey."

"Hush! It is not true. Nothing you can say, Ella, can make me more contemptible in my own eyes than I am. I am far more to blame than you, for I had no excuse. I am powerless to blame you, for I myself am entirely unworthy the confidence that has been placed in me. Until Ned comes the best in my house is yours; but I am myself again, and I am your slave no longer. I am going to Hattie to confess the miserable truth, and entreat her pardon for the cruel wrong I have done her. You and I will end this chapter here."

So saying, without a touch of the hand, a glance of the eye, he turned and left the room.

Through what bitterness of humiliation Ramsey Halstead passed only he and Heaven knew. Before his burning eyes the whole panorama of the winter passed, with a sharpness of detail that stung like countless fiery stings. Memory presented picture after picture in the full light of a searching truth, and the strong man writhed under the lash of his own honest condemnation.

"What can I do? How tell Hattie?" he asked himself again and again; and answer there was none.

He had betrayed Ned's confidence—almost broken Hattie's heart. What a weak, miserable wretch he was! So he told himself, and so he believed.

Presently Hattie came. He saw her leave the carriage and come slowly up the steps. How pale she was—how languid and sad! If any further punishment was necessary to humble him he received it as he realised what he had made her suffer—neglect, indifference, insult—harder things to bear than hunger, cold or blows.

Silently he opened the door and drew her into the room. Looking down into the honest brown eyes he essayed to speak, but for a moment his emotion overpowered him, and he groaned aloud.

She was the first to break the silence.

"I know it, Ramsey—it was to be."

With a great sob he gathered her into his arms and laid the little head on his bosom.

"For God's sake say something harsh to me, Hattie!" he begged. "I deserve that you should hate me. I have been a brute to you all the winter, and none the less so because, like

the blind, selfish fool that I was, I did not know what I was doing. I know you can't believe me, but I have loved you all the time, my darling, even while I was breaking your heart. I've been a fool, but never untrue to you even in thought, Hattie—so help me God!"

And what did Hattie say? Not one word. One little arm reached up and stole around his neck, and drew his head down till the sweet, patient lips could press his own; then, with a little tired cry she fell back in his arms and fainted away.

Frightened beyond measure, he alarmed the house, and chafed the cold hands and stiff face in a perfect agony of dread. Ella came, awed and trembling, for the cry had gone through the house:

"Mrs. Halstead is dead!"

Unheeded she crouched at the foot of the sofa on which Hattie lay so white and still. While everyone was doing something to restore her, she alone dared offer no aid.

By-and-by the eyes opened, and the white lips smiled into Ramsey's face with all their old peace and trust; and Ella, as she watched his face as he took his wife close to his heart, knew better than any words could tell her how far outside its pale she was.

Under this roof she remained till Ned came. Since her plans had failed it was no part of her desire that her husband should know what had been going on in his absence, and to leave before he came would be to invite inquiry. It was a painful time for all, but Hattie acquitted herself, as she always did, with a manner perfectly natural and wholly kind.

"All are guilty of follies, Ramsey," she said. "I think Ned cannot be benefited by being told of Ella's fault. Let us forget all unpleasantness and be friends."

Ella was silent, and Ramsey manly and straightforward, but it was not an agreeable ordeal.

Ned's coming was hailed by all as a most welcome event, and he was glad and happy, for "ignorance is bliss" sometimes.

## THE DITCH OF THE SEVEN DEAD.

For many centuries the lagoons of Venice have been divided into districts for the purpose of fishing. These tracts of water are not distinguished by any boundaries visible to the eye; but their limits are well known to the fishermen who make their living upon them. In the shallower parts of these districts, where the oozy bed of the lagoon is left bare by each receding tide, the fishermen have marked off a certain portion.

This they surround by a palisade of wattled cane. Inside this palisade the mud is dug into deep ditches, so that there shall always be water in them, even when the tide is low. These places are called "Valli," and here the fish are driven to spawn. Each of these "Valli" has a little hut belonging to it, built either on piles or on forced soil, and made of wattled cane plastered with mud, or of bricks.

Of the "Valle dei Sette Morti" there is a story current among the gondoliers and fishermen. There were six men fishing once in this "Valle" of the Seven Dead. They had with them a little boy, the son of one of their band. The boy did not go fishing with his father, but stayed behind to take care of the hut, and to cook the meals for the men when they returned.

He spent the nights alone in the cabin, for most of the fishing was done between sunset and sunrise.

One day as the dawn was beginning across the water the men stopped their fishing and began to row home with their load as usual. As they rowed along they met the body of a drowned man going out to sea with the tide. They picked the body up and laid it on the prow, the head resting upon the arm, and rowed on slowly toward the hut.

The little boy was watching for them, and

went down to the edge of the canal to meet them. He saw the body of the seventh man lying on the prow, but thought that he was asleep. So when the boat came near he cried to his father, "Breakfast is ready. Come along!"

And with that he turned and went back to the hut. The men followed the boy and left the dead man on the prow. When they sat down the boy looked round and said:

"Where is the other man? Why don't you bring him in to breakfast too?"

"Oh, isn't he here?" cried one, and then added, with a laugh, "You had better go and call him; he must be asleep."

The boy went down to the canal and shouted:

"Why don't you come to breakfast? It is all ready for you."

But the man on the prow never moved nor answered a word. So the boy returned to the hut and said:

"What is the matter with the man? He won't answer."

"Oh," said they, "he is a deaf old fool! You must shout loud, and swear at him."

The boy went back again and cried:

"Come along, you fool; the others are waiting for you."

But the man on the prow never moved nor answered a word. Then the boy ran back to the hut and said:

"Come, one of you, for I can't wake him up."

But they laughed and answered:

"Go out again and shake him by the leg; tell him we can't wait till doomsday for him."

The boy went down to the water once more. He got into the boat and shook the man by the leg. Then the man turned and sat up on the prow and said to the boy:

"What do you want?"

"Why on earth don't you come? Are they all to wait till doomsday for you?"

"Go back and tell them I am coming."

So the boy went back to the hut and found the men laughing and joking.

"Well, what did he say?" they cried.

"It is all right," answered the boy; "he says he is coming."

The men turned pale and looked at one another, and sat very still and laughed no more. Then outside they heard footsteps coming slowly up the path. The door was pushed open, and the dead man came in and sat down in the boy's place, the seventh at the table. But each sat with his eyes fixed upon the seventh, their guest.

They could not move or speak. Their gaze was fastened on the dead man's face. The blood flowed chillier and chillier in their veins, as the sun rose and flushed along the lagoon, there were seven dead men sitting round the table in the room.

It is said that there is a saving of more than forty per cent. per annum at the South Kensington Museum by the use of the electric light as compared with gas. As the authorities profess to be so favourably impressed with the light perhaps they will be enabled to introduce it into the National Portrait Gallery, which is now closed before dusk.

Honour to whom honour is due. From railway companies we must be thankful for small mercies. Any precautions of an expensive nature adopted by a company without official pressure are a subject for gratitude. The London and Brighton Railway Company are actually going to spend a sum of £70,000 in providing Westinghouse brakes and forming interlocking points.

Mr. E. L. BLANCHARD tells a good story of the impudence of those who in an inordinate degree share the universal passion of mankind to go into a place of amusement without paying. A personal application for "two to the boxes" was made by an absolute stranger the other day, and the intruder being asked on what grounds he requested the privilege of an order for the theatre blandly responded, "Well, you see, sir, I have the pleasure of being the tax collector for your district."



[THE LAST TIME SHE WAS PERFECTLY HAPPY IN HER LIFE.]

## CONTENT.

A SHORT STORY.

(COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

Her parents were poor; they lived in a plain house with plain furniture, and ate plain dinners, and were pinched just a little over plain dress. People knew that the Maxwells were poor.

Content was the eldest of three girls; a shy, gentle nature was hers. She had a mild face, with soft, grey eyes, and a considerate mouth. She never had longings for fine clothes and gaieties, as other girls have.

Once, on her fifth birthday, her mother, feeling a little richer than usual, said:

"Content, I will buy you a new dress to-morrow."

"I have a dress," she said, gravely.

"Well, then, a pair of new shoes."

"I like this pair of shoes best."

And they laughed at her and loved her well. She had friends for miles around.

At eighteen she had a lover. He was neither rich nor poor. His name was John Gilbert, and his temperament was as different from hers as the sea is from the river. But don't you know how the rivers flow down to mingle and lose their silver sunlight in the sea?

Content appreciated the difference in their natures.

"I wonder he can care for me a bit," she said, meekly. "I must seem stupid."

But she was very happy.

Gilbert worked for Hunt, who had a piano factory in a thriving country town. The Maxwells lived a few miles out. Gilbert earned good wages, but, alas! he had a failing. He wanted to be an inventor. He had some curious plan or contrivance which no one ever saw but himself, he took such jealous care of it. He wouldn't give even the slightest hint of its nature to his nearest friends, but kept working at it by himself in leisure hours—evenings when he was not about courting Content Maxwell. All very proper. Not quite so proper to tinker away on the Sabbath. "Six days shalt thou labour, and the seventh shalt thou rest."

Of course John Gilbert and Content were married. Young men in the country are more reasonable than those of town. They are not mean enough to sit and partake of hospitality—sharing the fire, the lights and the company suppers of their friends, for nothing.

The wedding breakfast (dinner in truth) was given at Maxwells' after a number of friends had witnessed the ceremony and wished the couple luck. The women all kissed the bride and wept a little. There was no fashionable law then, there or elsewhere, against shedding tears. Then the young couple settled down to a new life in a wee cottage with pine trees at the

gate and a flower-bed of sweet williams in the side-yard. Just the place for the little woman and her John.

Things went well with them until Gilbert began to work harder over his invention. He desisted now from Sunday labour, but spent hours late into the night, was fretful, sour and uncompanionable.

Meanwhile the little wife kept the cottage neat and pretty, cultivated flowers, and devised dainty household ornaments.

They had been married nearly two years, and if Content had followed her own inclinations there would have been a little hoard at the savings' bank for a rainy day, and perhaps more. And Mrs. Gilbert would have been content to wear a plainer dress and bonnet to church than hers. There would have been no debts at the grocer's and butcher's.

At first the young wife knew nothing of the latter, and—let us go back to one afternoon in early November; a still, mild day it was. They had a late coming winter, and the red-brown leaves on the young oaks lit up with ruddy evening glow as Content passed on her way down to the town. Far off in the west the sun stood, a round, rayless ball, fair to look upon, and one strip of stone-coloured cloud lay across its centre, as if this great red apple of light were slipped into a rack in the side-sky.

The dazzle fell upon her face and warmed her glad eyes to a golden brown. She went down that path happy, the last time she ever was perfectly happy in her life.

When she had made her purchases and paid for them at the grocer's the latter reminded her of the little account Mr. Gilbert was owing for things he took home with him every night.

The blood rushed to her face.

"I didn't know my husband owed anything. I thought he paid cash always."

She turned to go, then stopped as if she had forgotten something.

"I will remind my husband," she said, and went out quickly.

She went to Bly's (the butcher) and there ascertained that John had contracted even a larger bill than at the grocer's.

She went home immediately; but somehow the sun had set, the oaks were dark and cold, and—John had not told her everything. You would never hear her say to herself (no matter though it were possible that by close listening you could hear her silent thoughts) that John had deceived her. She was a loyal woman.

Gilbert came late to his supper, so that everything had been ready for some time. The neat little table set for two (is there a sweeter number to set for?), the pretty china, the teapot steaming by the fire.

Content saw that John seemed excited. She welcomed him, and he drank his tea and chatted with her.

"I'm out of Hunt's for good," he said, half gaily.

"Why, John! Left the factory?"

"Yes; my patent is most done, and I must give it my entire attention. Can't slave along at Hunt's any farther."

He did not tell her he had half received his dismissal because of neglecting his proper work. Why bother her? Hunt had undertaken to give his workman a sharp talking to. Gilbert had flared up.

"If I don't suit you I'd better leave."

"You don't suit me if you neglect my work, John."

"That settles it. I'll quit to-night."

"As you like; your time is about up."

"Do you really think it will pay?" Content asked, timidly, of her husband.

"Pay!" he cried, impatiently. "Why, it will make our fortune! Then we'll live in town. Con, and have some style. I think you had better begin practising up beforehand, wear trailing dresses, and make your hair curl in front like the Webb girls do theirs."

He pushed his chair back from the table, while his wife sat gazing at and admiring him. How bright his eyes were and how dark! How flushed his face was! Ambition! Destroyer



of mankind. "As he was ambitious I slew him!"

Content turned her eyes to the lamp, out of the direction of her blind idolatry, and began to think rapidly, her breath coming and going faster than before. What if they should become rich? Could she be happier than now? Was she not content to brush and beautify this bird's nest, to trim the sweet williams in summer time, to sweep the fallen needles of the pine trees from the front path, to read or sew or rest with folded hands and dreamy eyes when the western sun wove happy garlands on their plain red and brown sitting-room carpet?

Suddenly her gaze started from the lamp; she was troubled.

"John, how could you have kept it from me that we were in debt to Fenner and Bly—almost five pounds, John?"

Her voice was nearer trembling than he had ever before heard it.

"Oh! well, I was so busy, Con, I didn't think. I'll arrange those matters; don't you worry. We're going to be rich, old woman. Let's laugh while we may. 'For to-night we'll merry be.'"

And he began to sing.

"Why, John Gilbert, how funny you do act!"

She had to laugh at him. But his eyes had a feverish sparkle, and she laid both arms about his neck, taking his curly head upon her bosom to calm him.

He had his wages in his pocket.

"Give me my hat, Connie, and I'll go down and pay those bills."

"Oh! it's so late."

Only a little after eight, and it's only a mile or so. I'll be back before you know it. Not afraid, are you?"

"To stay here—afraid?" she said, wonderingly. "Why, no, of course not!"

So she brought the hat, stroked his hair, kissed him, and said:

"Go, dear."

Gilbert now worked constantly at his patent—he had it in the spare bedroom. Content took many a peep at him and his work, but she never said anything about it before or after. So she alone knew. Gilbert planned, adjusted, failed, succeeded, experimented, groaned, whistled, chuckled, rested, recommenced, finished.

Meanwhile, the rent for the month before had not been paid, and they were again running bills in the town. Gilbert was keeping the money in his pocket for his invention. Finally he said he must go to London to get a patent.

"Can't you get a patent without going?" asked his wife, hating to think of his absence.

"No—he would take, not send, the precious invention."

Content went quietly through her day's duties, after kissing her lord good-bye, at frosty, grey dawn, out under the pine trees at their gate. It was the fifteenth day of December. When the little woman had got her house in shape she sat down with folded hands and prayed Heaven's best blessings on her John, her dear and absent husband.

Scarcely a shadow touched her. How she loved the sunlight! How she loved to look out of her sitting-room window—a bow that looked east, south, and west! No snow as yet; the sun's boldness had frightened away the frost. No rough winds astir; only happy little sparrows breaking the silence.

Soon she saw her next younger sister coming up the path, and ran to meet her.

"Oh, Eva!" she said, "I'm so glad. I was thinking of you this morning. Yes, John went by the early train. I was afraid he'd miss it. He is to be gone ten long days. How I shall do without him I scarcely know. Take off your things."

The Maxwells lived quite a little way farther up the road.

"So John has really gone?" Eve asked.

She was of the careful, incredulous type, plain-faced, good-hearted, and industrious.

"Yes," said her sister, gleefully, and told her

how much John expected of his invention. "You see, Eva, we're going to be rich—John says so—and live in the city. John thinks that best; and I think it would be nice for you to live with us. Father and mother have Cornelia. And John would like it too."

"Wait till you have it," remarked Eva, sagely. "I haven't much faith in sudden fortunes. If John had been saving money since he was married and invested it somewhere, and his investment had paid, etc., I should feel more certain, you know, that you were going to get rich. But I hope he will be rewarded for his labour and ingenuity—indeed I do."

"Of course you do!" Content rejoined, affectionately, after her sister's little sermon. "I feel very confident, because John told me it would come all right just before he left this morning."

Then she put away Eva's wraps, and the younger girl took out some worsted work.

"Unfortunately or fortunately—which is it?—I am not on the verge of being rich. So I must work."

"What are you making?"

"Hoods for Mrs. Griffen. She has taken a contract for a city warehouse to make an immense number. She had to have five or six helpers all the summer. I didn't know anything about it till a few days ago. Hettie Lamb has made quite a sum of money doing them. They will be done by Christmas. Aren't they pretty?"

"Lovely! Are they hard to make?"

"No; see how I do them."

Content gave a little start. She had an idea.

"Do you think Mrs. Griffen would like one more hand?"

"Perhaps, why?"

"I'd like to do some."

"I thought you were going to get rich," said Eva, dryly.

"Oh, well! You see I want to make John a nice Christmas present, and I haven't a penny. It just perplexes me what to do!"

Eva wound another ball of wool.

"Go to Griffen's to-morrow with me, and we'll see."

In two or three days Content heard from John; he wasn't much of a writer. It was only a short note, stating that he had arrived and was well, and it would take him several days to attend to his business, and he sent her his love and was "as ever" her "husband." Still it was a letter—though not perhaps of the kind that some of us receive from our husbands (God bless their sweet, tender, protecting hearts!) when land and water stretch far and dreary between them and us.

Content worked away for several days, and then considered her little "pile" sufficient to buy a present for her liege lord. She crocheted mostly at Mrs. Griffen's; it was lonely at the cottage. Eva had to remain at home, Cornelia having sprained her ankle. Mrs. Gilbert went up each evening and spent the night at her old home. Thus she kept heart and hands busy, often smiling as she imagined how funny it would seem, the recollection of all this, a few months hence.

The present she intended spending her own earnings upon was a picture of herself, a photograph large enough to frame in a round frame and hang upon the wall. She had one, but it was poor, and her husband never liked it.

One afternoon after the "hood business" was ended, and after she had sat for her picture, she stood before Gilbert's likeness, went nearer, and kissed it with tears of sweet affection shining in her eyes. Then she locked the door and started for her father's house.

Half a mile along she crossed the river, which at that point was deep. Rain had fallen a day or two previous, and the water came rushing heavily down from the hills. She stopped a little while on the rough, rustic bridge and gazed thoughtfully at the brown, unsettled stream flowing off, off to a larger river, thence to the sea. She wondered how the ocean looked.

"When did you hear from John?" her mother inquired.

"Only that once, four days ago. Maybe he'll be home to-morrow."

Then she folded her hands placidly and sat listening to the others, the older ones chatting upon indifferent matters, the younger gathering about the discordant old melodeon and singing country songs, gay, old-fashioned, stirring, as only the fresh young country voices could ring out rich and glad.

"Christmas comes on Friday this year," said Father Maxwell; "only four days more."

"Yes, I know," said Content, smiling at him and going off into another dream. "I shall have a grand piano," she was musing.

She played very little herself, "Gaily the Troubadour," and such pieces as fill the pages of some quaint music-book of "long ago." But there would be others, she thought, to play her piano. John himself, when he had time, was a good musician.

She might have had an instrument before this, but John had said he would not take one of Hunt's pianos for a gift. They were only made to send out in the surrounding country. So she thought on, her patient soul satisfied and happy.

Oh, the ending of that tender little drama! She went again the following day to town to see if her picture was finished. She stood timidly looking at it, now here, now there. She had taken the trouble to dress in her wedding-dress the day this picture was taken—her wedding-dress, soft and dove-like, with its mellow lace at the throat; she had curled her front hair on torturing bits of lead paper out of an old tea-box.

Did the artist think it a good picture?

"Better likeness never was taken."

She paid for it with pride, chose a frame, had it framed, and carried it home in triumph. Beside this she had also made John a pair of new slippers. There never was a young, inexperienced wife yet who did not consider her husband's holiday slippers a religious duty.

Both presents were ready, and they kept Content company while awaiting her husband's return: He must come soon. Each meal time saw his plate set, his wife listening for his foot-fall. Listening trustfully, hopefully—not as some wives listen, awaiting an unsteady step, a thick utterance, a poisonous breath—those wives who listen, praying between each heart-throb:

"God send him home anyhow, any way—only send him soon."

No, Content bore no such cross.

Christmas Eve saw neither husband nor letter. But he would surely be there in the morning. So Eva spent the night with her sister, and went home early to help prepare the family dinner, to which Content was to bring John.

The young wife went about making herself ready for the meeting. She donned her best dress—why were her dresses all grey or drab?—looped back her soft brown hair, and cut a red, fragrant rose from the window plant for her bosom. She would not go to the station to meet him. He would rather find her at their cottage door, where he could put his great, strong arms about her, and fold her to his heart once more.

And the time drew near. Oh, rude awakening from a fair, frail dream! She did not hear the gate click nor his step upon the threshold. She was searching in the closet for some sweet, old-fashioned perfume to scent her handkerchief and his clean linen.

Dear, womanly instinct! The same that impelled her to set forth the dainty lunch of pastry and hot coffee, that he need not wait hungry or thirsting.

Suddenly—she could hardly realise it—he stood before her, dust-begrimed as she had anticipated, and moreover strangely haggard and sullen.

With a little scream of delight she arose and threw herself in his arms, and kissed him, sobbing gladly. Then she recovered self-control, took his bag from him, and set it on the floor.

"Sit down, my darling John. Tell me, how did the patent go?"

He turned roughly on her.  
"Curse it!" he cried. "Somebody else had the idea ahead. There ain't any money in it! Oh, curse the luck that I've got to stand! My God, I—"

She offered a remonstrance for the first time in her life to him.

"John, don't speak the Almighty's name in such a way."

Then a rush of recollection told her what it meant to say "failure." It meant their little home must go—the furniture be sold to pay the two months' rent due and the other bills in town.

Her parents could advance no money. They might take the couple under their roof, but where was Gilbert to get employment? He had quarrelled with Hunt—left him, she supposed—and could get no recommendation. A dreary outlook! Her poor air-castles had fallen down out of the clouds.

The presents for John lay upon the table by the window, but he never noticed them; he only stood glaring at her with a sullen, wild expression. Even then her buoyant nature rose of itself, feeling still brave to battle with trouble.

"Dear John," she said, going close and looking up in his face, "we have each other yet. It must be all for the best. We need not despair."

But he only leered maliciously at her. He was crazed in a measure. She, not knowing this, continued, pathetically:

"Perhaps if this had come as we wished something bad would have happened. Perhaps we would have been miserable. I am—I was so content here—"

An awful frenzy seized him. He reached forward and—God forgive him!—struck her down with his clenched hand. She fell and lay still as death, while he laughed wildly.

"Now are you content—happy—very content?"

Then his madness took another shape, so that he half realised what he had done. He thought he had murdered somebody—he knew not who it was. He shrieked loudly and ran out of the still house, tearing down the quiet road—on—on till he reached the river, where he leaped desperately in, and was soon beyond succour—"on Christmas day, in the morning."

Content stirred feebly; it was a desolate coming back to consciousness, when she found herself lying painless but weak in a darkened chamber at her father's house. For a moment she imagined herself again a young girl, and waking from an unpleasant dream some winter morning. Then slowly lifting her hands she saw the wedding-ring upon her finger, and the anguish of remembering came overwhelmingly upon her.

They had not the heart to tell her he was dead. Poor Gilbert! His body was found below the town, and none knew but that it was an accident. The Maxwells were very silent upon the subject.

When one of the family went down to Gilbert's cottage to learn why the young couple had not come to dinner, Content was lying on the floor unconscious, with the mark upon her forehead of an awful blow; Gilbert's little bag stood on the floor where he had dropped it. So the poor little woman was carried back to the home of her childhood to leave it no more. Then Gilbert's body was found, and the Maxwells drew their own conclusions.

Now that Content recognised the members of the family they dreaded to spend much time in the room.

"She must not talk," they insisted; "she had been ill."

"What makes you wear black all the time?" she asked of Cornelia.

The latter pretended not to hear, and moved out quickly.

The convalescent repeated the question to Eva, adding:

"It makes you look pale."

"Black used to become me," said Eva, quietly.

"And you all act strangely. Where's mother? Have I given you much trouble?"

"No trouble, Content; we love you."

"But how has John got along without me?"

It was coming now. Eva saw she was to be the breaker of the news.

"Is he very angry with me?" the weak voice continued, pitifully.

"I think not, no—no," was the reply, given with a great effort.

"Then I must get well at once and go to him. I have no business to be here."

"Oh, you cannot," Eva said, with a big sob in her throat.

"But I must go to my husband! Do you think I would leave John?" rising upon her elbow indignantly.

"Listen," said Eva, slowly. "Oh, Tentie, how can I tell you?"

They were looking straight at each other.

Which was the whiter no man might choose, as the poem goes.

"Oh, he is dead," broke in the young widow, with a strange wail, and buried her face in her hands and then in the pillow.

Eva burst out crying.

"Don't cry, dear," said the weak voice, and the pale face looked up at her with dry eyes.

"Don't cry—I can still go to him."

There was no relapse for her, no merciful oblivion. After awhile she fully recovered and went about once more, walking placidly through all trials.

Her father had sold all the cottage furniture save a few little things he deemed most precious to his daughter. These he brought home, and he also discharged the debts outstanding against the Gilberts.

Only once she gave vent to her sorrow, when putting away her picture and the unworn slippers she had given her husband. These she laid away where they should never grieve her more, dropped her head on the trunk in the garret, and sobbed herself to sleep. Then she took her place at her parents' home, again eldest daughter, and filled out her allotted time.

A worthy man asked her in course of time to be his wife; she only said mildly that she had long ago buried her heart. Some of the townspeople said to themselves that one such experience was enough for her.

And one more afternoon she sat pale and placid in a rocking-chair, where the winter's amber sunlight strayed through a western window of her father's house, through which she could see the red oaks that had flouted at her through another November. As the hours passed she folded her hands like a tired little child and rocked herself to sleep—for ever.

With hushed voices and low sobs they said:

"She is dead!"

And wrote upon her humble tombstone her age, the date, and only the one word:

"Content."

## MISCELLANEOUS.

It has been suggested that balls should be held periodically in the Pier Pavilion at Hastings. Also the laying down of a tram from the entrance of the pier to the Pavilion for those who attend the balls.

THE Revised New Testament has not found much favour on the other side of the Atlantic. When first published a good many copies were disposed of, but dissatisfaction was felt that the suggestions sent from the United States had not received more attention, and by this time there is scarcely any sale for the work that was the labour for so many years of so many grave divines.

THERE are no greater foes to ancient monuments than our railway companies. Everything must give way to meet their requirements. Within the last century no less than fourteen

churches, erected from Sir Christopher Wren's designs, have been destroyed, and now the South Western Railway is regarding the Church of St. James's, Garlickhithe, with longing eyes, as affording a suitable site for the erection of their new City station. There is really no excuse whatever for the demolition of this particular church, for the inhabitants of the parish, unlike so many of their neighbours, have not migrated to the suburbs. Unless the City Church Protection Society bestir themselves this church will go the way of so many other of Wren's masterpieces, and in its place will rise up another unsightly pile such as those which disfigure Cannon Street and Charing Cross.

SINCE the death of President Garfield the Queen has been deluged with gifts of all sorts from Americans, few of which, it may interest the readers to know, have been permitted to reach Her Majesty. One notable exception was made, in a most kindly way, in favour of a little girl of Ohio, who sent to the Queen a wild flower from the grave-side of the President, and in return received a feeling acknowledgment from Mr. Lowell.

GREAT opposition is being made in the higher circles of London society against the introduction of the new game of la baraque, which like *carté* after having been played for some time among the lower orders of the people is gradually creeping up into the salons. The game is simply one of the merest chance, an opportunity for gamblers to win and lose sums as large as at the forbidden games no longer played at the clubs. The baraque (or hovel) is a little covered shed, fixed to the end of the billiard table—behind stands a board upon an inclined plane—filled with holes bearing certain numbers. The player stands at the further end of the billiard table and sends the ball rolling through the archway of the baraque on to the board. The player to whom belongs the ball which falls into the hole bearing the highest number is proclaimed the winner—and already do we hear the strangest stories, exaggerated no doubt, of the immense sums staked at this vulgar, low-lived game.

TWO new police districts are to be created for London, and the arrangements will soon be made and the vacancies filled. The pay is £1,500 a year, the same as a County Court judge, but the responsibilities are less grave, and the nature of the work more easy. There are many candidates, but Mr. Biron, the Recorder of Hythe, is considered certain to have one of them.

AT the beginning of this year Combermere Abbey and the Imperial stud were all in readiness for the arrival of the Empress of Austria, and those who were permitted to see the grounds were struck with the singular appearance of the Park—temporary fences of different heights having been erected to enable her Majesty to practise her chargers in leaping during her spare hours. The farmers of the district are far from being delighted with the Imperial visit, for the Empress's presence attracts such enormously large fields that the property over which the hunts take place is considerably damaged. A pretty large sum last year was paid for compensation to farmers for the destruction of their fences and hedges.

AMONGST the silent mourners of the ill-fated Mr. Walter Powell, M.P., is the ardent band of ladies who agitate for women's suffrage. He had steadily and consistently voted on their side in every division which took place in regard to that question since 1870.

A CERTAIN London manager, never before accused of humour, wrote to a leading actress asking her to play for him, and told her to name her terms. She replied at once, and named thirty pounds a night. To which he returned, "Dear Madam, make it shillings and it's a bargain."

THE West end of town has scarcely ever been so full at this season as it is this year. At all the clubs the influx of members is much more like April or May than January. The reason for this is in a great measure because the winter has been so mild and the hunting so good that men have worked up their studs of horses and are obliged to rest from the pleasures of the



chase. It is something new to hear hunting men say that they wish for a frost; but such is the case this winter. The great decrease of incomes is in many instances also a reason for the coming up to town at the season. A man can hardly hide his comparative poverty in the country, but he can do so in London with comparative ease.

The telephone is about to be laid from London to Brighton, and it is proposed to have a telephone service, or circuit, in the latter town by which the inhabitants may, if so minded, be able to converse with each other without the trouble or inconvenience of leaving their firesides. Mr. W. S. Gilbert, the successful dramatic author, has endeavoured to get a telephone fixed between his house at South Kensington and the Savoy Theatre in the Strand, in order that he may listen to and direct the rehearsal of his pieces without the trouble of putting in an appearance on the stage, but as he has been unable to get the assent of two or three of the neighbours to allow the wire to be carried over their gardens to his own the project has dropped.

MR. HARRISON AINSWORTH has died poor, comparatively speaking, but rich in fame. Still, he has left precious relics in some manuscripts, which, we believe, will be inherited by his wife, and ought to fetch a weighty price. It has not been stated, as far as we have seen, that Mr. Ainsworth in the early part of his life was Secretary of the Middle Temple.

A NEW YORK genius has invented a system of theatre seats which can be made to fold up and sink in such a way as to leave the auditorium entirely unobstructed, if it is desirable to clear a theatre rapidly, as in case of fire or panic from any cause. This is an excellent device, but the seats are so made that they can be raised or lowered for the whole floor at one point, and one shudders to think of the consequences should a wag get at the controlling key while the audience were quietly seated!

OWING to the wide spread of speculation rampant in France of late, Suez Canal shares have been forced up to extraordinary prices. Their nominal value is £20 a share, that being the full amount paid. Recently they were quoted on the Paris Bourse at £140 a share. They have just suffered a severe relapse, but now stand at £90 a share, or four times and a-half their original value. England holds 177,000 shares, for which £4,000,000 were paid. The market price at the time of the purchase was a little over £23—at any rate we hold what at present prices would realise close upon £16,000,000, and a short time ago would have brought nearly £24,000,000.

AN extraordinary English daily paper is promised us, if one in three languages—English, French and German—can be called English, from the fact of its being produced and published here. The funds of mind and coin at the disposal of this undertaking are, we are informed, enormous. The undertakers are stated to be the Union Générale.

THE greatest novelty in "specialist" journalism is a monthly magazine edited by a lady, and called the "Wooden," devoted to the interests of artificial hatching.

THE electric-lighting apparatus is not yet all fixed at the Crystal Palace. It has been decided to defer the presentation of medals in connection with the recent Woollen Exhibition until the ceremony can take place beneath the full lustre of the new light. Additional éclat will then be given to the ceremony, and Yorkshire manufacture will receive another pat on the back. Lady Bective surely ought to be asked to present the prizes.

WHILE, on the one hand, it has been customary for good people to hurl anathemas against bad people who get into debt it has, on the other hand, been customary for a certain set of church-goers to build churches long in advance of their possessing money enough to pay for the structure. Yet debt of this kind, to be wiped out by constant appeals in the name of religion to the pockets of both the well-to-do and the needy has been looked upon as right and proper. The Presbytery of London has now come to the conclusion that church bazaars are not to be

encouraged, and one speaker went so far as to say that he thought the promoters of them made themselves liable to be treated as rogues and vagabonds—mentally, no doubt, adding, "with in the meaning of the Act." Be this as it may a resolution has been passed condemning the holding of bazaars and the like for church purposes. This will be, if any notice is taken of it—which is unlikely—a sad blow to the ladies, but a matter of intense congratulation to the unfortunate men.

It was one of the greatest reproaches to the Government in passing the Land Act that they were about to defraud the landlords in order to enrich the lawyers. One of the principal Irish barristers concerned on behalf of the tenants in proceedings before the Land Court has already received no less than £20,000 in fees on account of cases he has brought before the Commissioners.

#### ACROSS THE AISLES.

I MEET her every Sabbath day,  
Down in the lane where sunbeams  
play;

And follow her past oak and birch,  
Into the quaint, old-fashioned church.

She sits across the aisles from me,  
A worshipper devout to see;  
But I can never find my place,  
For gazing at her quiet face.

Hers is no vain and gaudy dress;  
Naught but youth's garb of loveliness  
Adorns the form so kindly meant  
For Nature's robe of sweet content.

Her bonnet, too, is quaint and small;  
It scarcely hides her hair at all;  
And 'neath those lashes long and brown

What thoughtful looks are shimmered  
down!

Her place within that humble pew  
Is promptly filled the long day  
through;  
Where heart and voice with one  
accord

Join in glad praise unto the Lord.

I know not what the name may be  
Of the fair maid so dear to me;  
I may not ever know, but still  
Her presence makes each wild pulse  
thrill.

Yet calmly walks she with her God,  
Content to follow where He trod;  
While I can only watch the smiles  
Upon her face across the aisles.

#### STATISTICS.

THE STRENGTH OF THE BAPTISTS.—There are, it seems, now in the United Kingdom 2,586 Baptist churches, as against 2,565 in 1880, and 2,692 in 1871; 3,395 chapels, as against 3,537 in 1880 and 3,044 in 1871; 1,101,361 chapel seats, as against 1,052,279 in 1880 and 935,015 in 1876 (no return for 1881); 205,035 members, as against 281,061 in 1880 and 243,395 in 1871; 46,321 Sunday-school teachers, as against 40,216 in 1878; 433,801 Sunday scholars, as against 430,608 in 1880 and 315,080 in 1871; 1,885 pastors in charge, as against 1,902 in 1880 and 1,779 in 1878; 3,247 evangelists, as against 3,039 in 1880 and 3,524 in 1876. The membership of the Scottish Churches is 9,703, and of the Irish 1,532; while in Wales it is 63,834. The grand totals throughout the world are: Churches, 28,505; Pastors or Missionaries, 17,683; and Membership, 2,473,088. Upon new chapels erected, providing accommodation for 18,850 persons, £24,568 has been expended; upon schools for 7,535 persons, £16,934; upon 58 chapels enlarged and improved, £19,850. Chapel

debts have during the year been diminished to the extent of £87,792. Twenty-seven ministers have died, 19 at an average age of 69.

COAL PRODUCTION.—It appears, according to the statistical researches of M. Vuillemin, that from 1855 to 1880 the total coal production of the world passed from 104 to 294 millions of tons, making an increase, during the last 25 years, of 190 millions, or 180 per cent. The number of men actually engaged in this production is nearly 1,220,000, making an average of about 240 tons per annum to each man. The average wages being £50 per annum, a ton of coal produced costs in labour alone an average of 4s. 2d. Taking the value per ton in Great Britain at 6s. 9d., and in other countries at 10s. 5d., the total value of the coal raised in 1880 in the world would be £108,279,900. This value is, however, at least doubled by the cost of transport, profit, and sundry expenses, so that the cost of the total quantity of coal consumed in the world may fairly be put at £216,559,800.

#### GEMS OF THOUGHT.

THE first of all virtues is innocence; the second is modesty; and neither departs without being quickly followed by the other.

HE who betrays another's secret because he has quarrelled with him was never worthy of the name of friend; a breach of kindness will not justify a breach of trust.

TRUTH is immortal; the sword cannot pierce it, fire cannot consume it, prisons cannot harm it, famine cannot starve it.

THERE is a wide-spread idea that there is nothing to be done with our impressions except passively to experience them, that they involve no further duty and carry with them no special responsibility. Never was there a greater mistake. They are, on the contrary, the germs of all noble life and virtuous endeavour, given to us to nourish and develop. If we neglect to do this, and sit contentedly enjoying the pleasure or enduring the pain they bring, without realizing their meaning or vitalizing them by the wholesome air of active endeavour, we do ourselves and the world a great injustice.

#### HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

PATTY CRUSTS.—Roll out the dough (made from the recipe for puff paste given last week) to a thickness of a quarter inch, and in a square shape; cut out the patties with a tin cutter, round or oval as wished, place them on a cake pan, which must not be too thin, and must be wetted with water. Take one egg, well whipped, and a few drops of milk. With a brush colour the tops without touching the side, then with a smaller tin cutter (half the size of the first) mark the patties, but not too deeply in the centre, and put in an oven hot enough to roast a chicken. When cooked take out the centres with a small pointed knife and use them as covers.

BLACK CAKE.—To one pound pulverised sugar add one pound of good salt butter; one pound of the best flour carefully sifted is to be worked into the sugar and butter in a cool place; use one dozen eggs, yolks and whites thoroughly beaten; mix together ten tablespoonfuls of brandy, the same of rosewater; stir into half an ounce of pulverised cinnamon one whole nutmeg, a mustard spoonful of ground cloves, and the whole dried rind of an orange. Stir this thoroughly into the mixture, using the hands to make the dough even. The fruit is to be added last. The composition is two pounds of small raisins, with the seeds taken out, the same of currants, the currants having been thoroughly washed in two waters, and one pound of citron, cut into thin shavings with a penknife. The pan should be a deep one, of tin or iron, and must be thoroughly greased. Grease the tissue paper with which you line the pan. You want a hot oven, and bake fully four hours.

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## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**ROBERT.**—The Chinese have a great deal of music, and play on different kinds of instruments; but, as a rule, their music is exceedingly unpleasant to our ears.

**BRETHARD.**—To clean marble, take two parts of common soda, one part of pumice stone, and one part of finely powdered chalk. Sift it through a fine sieve and mix it with the water. Then rub it well all over the marble, and the stains will be removed. To finish the work, wash the marble over with soap and water, and it will be as clean as it was at first.

**ALBERT.**—To make sarsaparilla, take of sarsaparilla root, cut and bruised, six ounces; distilled water, eight pints. After macerating for two hours with a heat about 195 degrees, take out the root and bruise it; add it again to the liquor, and macerate it for two hours longer, then boil down the liquor to four pints, and strain it. The dose is from four ounces to half a pint daily.

**A. E.**—A cement to unite rubber that has not been vulcanised is made as follows: Melt together sixteen parts of gutta-percha, four parts of India-rubber, two parts of common caulkers' pitch, and one part of linseed oil. Use hot.

**KATE.**—Excessive perspiration of the hands may be checked by bathing them occasionally in a weak solution of alum water.

**J. A.**—Cubic contents are obtained in the following manner: To make it clear we give a question: What are the cubic contents of a stone 12 feet long, 12 inches square at one end, and 6 inches square at the other. To ascertain this, to the sum of the area of the two ends add four times the area of the middle section parallel to them, and multiply this sum by one-sixth of the perpendicular height. The sum of the areas of the two ends (144 and 36) is 180. The area of the middle section (the mean width being 9 inches) is 81; multiplied by 4, we have 324, which added to 180 gives 504. The height is 144 inches; divide this by 6, and we get 24 as the multiplier. The answer will be the contents in cubic inches—12096. Divide this by 1728, the number of cubic inches in a cubic foot, and the answer is 7 feet.

**NEP.**—To clean silver, mix two teaspoonfuls of ammonia in a quart of hot soap-suds. Put in the silverware and rub it, using an old nailbrush or toothbrush for the purpose. Then wipe it dry with a soft cloth and polish it with chamois leather.

**F. H.**—Benzine will clean kid gloves better and more expeditiously than anything else.

**A. G.**—The 12th of July is celebrated by the secret society called Orangemen as the anniversary of the battle of the Boyne, in which William III., Prince of Orange, defeated his father-in-law, James II. The battle was fought July 1, 1690. The defeated monarch fled to France, where he remained until his death, September 16, 1701.

**R. H.**—Among the Eastern nations the ruby was regarded as a beneficent stone, which cured all evils arising from the unkindness of friends.

**W. M.**—Herodotus, the celebrated Greek historian, styled the "Father of History," was born in Halicarnassus, Asia Minor, about 484 B.C., and is supposed to have died in Thurii, Italy, about 420. He is said to have been exiled from Halicarnassus by the tyrant Lygdamis, and travelled in Greece, Africa, Asia, and Europe, noting the manners and customs of the people whom he visited, the scenery, cities, temples, etc. He returned to Halicarnassus about 455, and assisted in expelling Lygdamis. He removed soon after to Athens, and occupied himself with the composition of his great work, which is comprised in nine books. Its principal subject is the internal struggles of the Greeks, but he has introduced narratives of the histories of the Persians, Medes, Egyptians, and other peoples. He is considered the most reliable of all ancient historians, the only drawback being his undue love for the marvellous. When he speaks from his own observation he is truthful and accurate. His style is elegant and harmonious, and his book is prized as a rare composition as well as a history.

**G. M.**—Mica is a transparent mineral capable of being split into very fine plates, and is used mostly for stove doors, lanterns, reflectors, etc., and in some places as a substitute for window glass, and hence also called

Muscovy glass. It is very generally distributed throughout the world, but the largest sheets or plates of it are found in Siberia, Sweden and Norway, where they have been obtained three feet in width. Isinglass is the commercial name for a form of animal jelly obtained from the bladders of various fishes, and is nearly pure gelatine. The best is the Russian article, made from the sturgeon caught in the Black and Caspian seas. The Japanese isinglass is prepared from sea-weed.

**ALBERT.**—It is believed by many that the hair continues to grow after death, and cases have been cited to prove the fact. Without wishing to enter into a controversy on the subject, it is sufficient to say that no authenticated case has ever come to the notice of medical men who have made the subject a specialty. One authority, after citing two cases, in which, on opening the coffins several years after the parties were buried, the hair was said to have grown to a marvellous length, says: "A sufficient answer to these wild statements is afforded in the physiological fact that all vital action in the body necessarily ceases with life, and therefore the post-mortem growth of the hair, at least through the regular mode of production, must be considered as an impossibility."

## A SENSIBLE GIRL.

He was rich, he was gallant, and brimful of life,  
And he came to the village to pick out a wife  
From the bery of girls he had often met there—  
The short and the tall, the dark and the fair.

He made up his masculine mind from the start,  
As he essayed to play that most difficult part,  
A suitor not suited, amidst the gay whirl,  
To wed with no one but a sensible girl.

He said naught of mere prettiness, mere style or grace;  
The beauty of form or the beauty of face;  
And the consequence was, I am told by a friend,  
Each pretty young lassie was at her wits' end.

Some could wait to perfection, some sing and some flirt,  
Some could get up a toilette or ruffle a skirt,  
Others thought that true art was to crimp and to curl,  
But few knew the rôle of a sensible girl.

The few sober maids who could bake and could brew,  
Could patch and could darn, could knit and could sew,  
Determined to show their accomplishments off,  
No matter how much their fair sisters might scoff.

So they tied on their aprons and rolled up their sleeves,  
And bravely did battle with breadpans and sieves,  
And the bread they turned out was as light, so I'm told,  
As the hearts that beat under the aprons' white fold.

And our hero he ate of the bread that was light,  
And danced with the volatile maidens at night,  
Yet declared, as he feasted or joined the mad whirl,  
That he'd failed yet to find an even one sensible girl.

"I see many 'ladies,'" he said to himself,  
"Who lay all their usefulness by on the shelf;  
And I see many thrifty as thrifty can be,  
Who can't act the lady—now none such for me."

"The two must combine in my wife," thought our hero,  
And his ardent young hopes fell far below zero;  
And Cupid, dejected, his shaft failed to hurl—  
Sweet maids, try the rôle of a sensible girl.

## PUZZLES.

## XXXVI.

## STAR PUZZLE.

The head of a rabbit. A place of abode. A foreign country. A town in Switzerland. A foreign bird. An insect. A vowel. The initials, down, will name a great musician.

## XXXVII.

## CHARADE.

First rests upon my first,  
Whilst sitting in my second;  
And in my whole I rest with ease,  
And easy it is reckon'd.

Of my first my second owns a pair—  
So do you and I;  
And now, I'm sure, with little care  
You'll guess me if you try.

## SQUARE WORDS.

## XXXVIII.

1. Nearly all. To perform. A prophet. A novice.
2. Green for against. Want. A bird. Not industriously.
3. Fates. A constellation. Furnished with ribs (curtailed). Grand. Contempt.

## ENIGMA.

## XXXIX.

By kings and princes I am owned,  
Though not by queens and earls;  
Boys, men and women do me hate,  
Yet I am fond of girls.

Although I'm ne'er in houses seen,  
Yet still I dwell 'mid bricks;  
Mules, horses, donkeys, without me,  
Could not give any kicks.

Though in the letter I ne'er am,  
I'm ever in the ink;  
Not in the water do I dwell,  
Save in the midst of drink.

In your thoughts I never live,  
Save when you of me think;  
Nor am I ever in your eye,  
But when you at me wink.

## XL.

## PALINDROMIC DIAMONDS.

1. A letter. A thing that whirls. The trivial name of a species of spoonbills. A kind of vehicle. A letter.
2. A letter. Used by fishermen. Opinion. A number. A letter.

## XLI.

## CROSSWORDS.

## I.

In Chicago, not in Boston;  
In Chicago, not in Boston;  
In Chicago, not in Boston;  
In Chicago, not in Boston;  
The total is a beautiful Mexican plant.

## II.

In aorta, not in vein;  
In aorta, not in vein;  
In aorta, not in vein;  
In aorta, not in vein;  
The total is a plant of the genus Arum.

## ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S PUZZLES.

## XXXII.

1. Reflection. 2. False.

## XXXIII.

C, I, V, I, C—Civic.

## XXXIV.

LUCE REIN KOKO CIRC  
UDAL BASE OVAR IDEA  
CALL ISLE KAMA REAR  
ELLA NEED ORAI LARK

## XXXV.

CLAMANT  
POINT  
STY  
E  
ALB  
LILLY  
ALCANA

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